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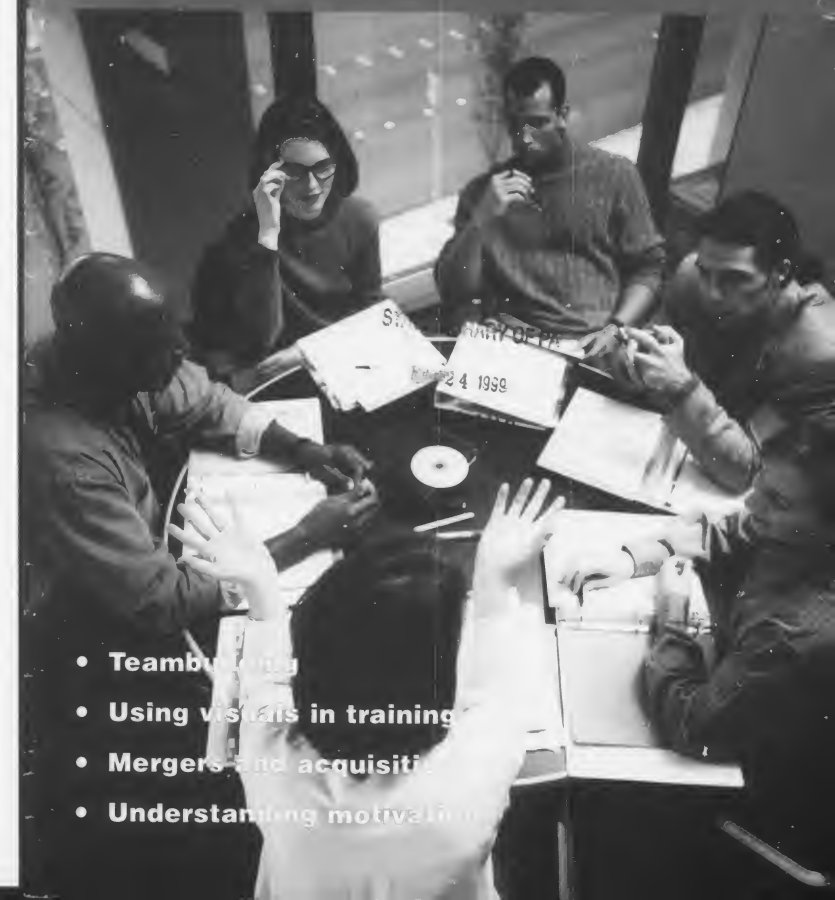

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- Mergers and acquisitions
- Understanding motivation

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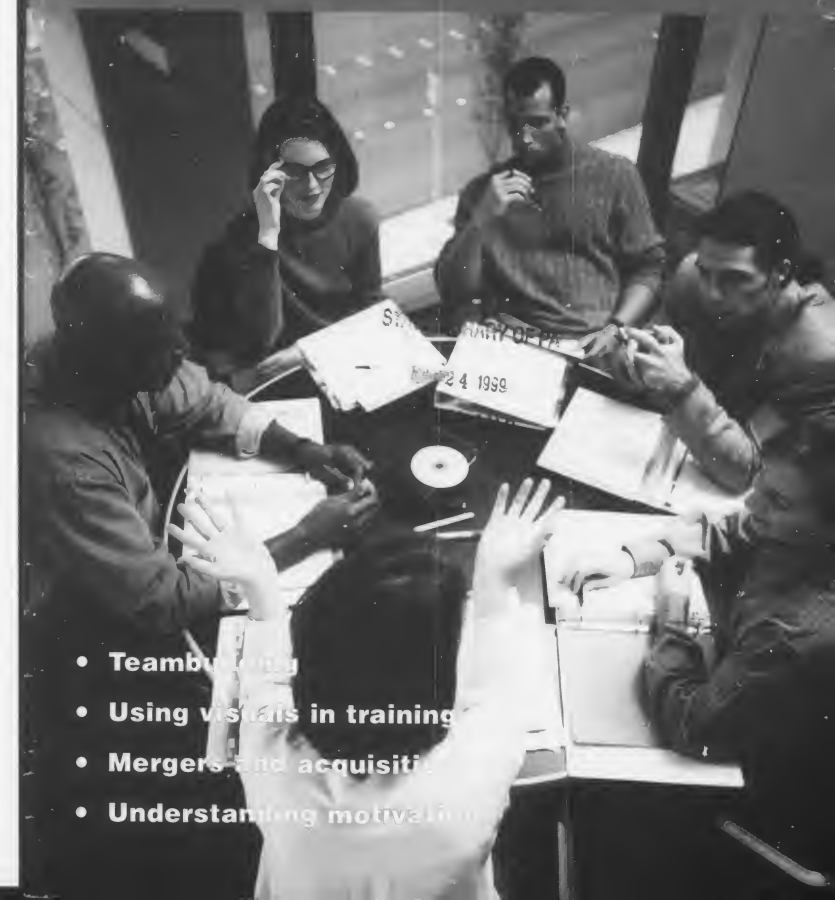

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Dates for your diary *Inside back cover*

IN BRIEF

The Government has announced the appointment of Alan Stevens — Chief Executive of the IT services company EDS — to head up a new high-powered industry-led group to address skills needs in the information and communication technology and electronics sectors. The group will form part of the National Skills Task Force and will draw on the Department of Trade and Industry's Information Age Partnership.

Liberty Mutual, insurer of occupational disability and global provider of health and safety services, is developing an Occupational Health Centre in central Aberdeen. Building of the facilities, funded by a £5 million investment by Liberty Mutual, began last year and completion is scheduled for the end of 1999. The centre will provide training, teaching and research, focused on occupational health issues.

Vaughan Waller of multimedia support and consultancy specialist CC Information Systems has been elected Chairman of The Association for Computer Based Training.

Sewells Training and Consultancy, a UK provider of training and development programmes, has appointed three additional trainers/consultants — Peter Hewson, Iain Stewart and Neil Meadows.

The Government has announced the appointment of Norman McLean, Lord Tom Sawyer and John Steele to the Board of Investors in People UK. Norman McLean is the Director of the National Mentoring Consortium. Lord Tom Sawyer has had long experience of promoting workforce development and the Investors in People Standard through the trades union movement. John Steel is Group Personnel Director of BT.

Neil Allpress, Managing Director of Siemens IT Service, has been appointed to the Board of the new Electronic and Software Services National Training Organisation (ESS NTO).

Call centres offer young high flyers fast-track route to management

Call centres provide a first job for many people. A survey carried out by the Call Centre Association and The Oxford Group, a specialist call centre training company, found that 72 per cent of managers had worked in call centres for fewer than five years. The majority of staff surveyed were under 30 years of age.

A total of 47 organisations were involved in the research into the attitudes and opinions of agents and managers, including different types and sizes of call centre. The research was conducted through face-to-face interviews and in-depth telephone calls, and was followed up by a questionnaire for call centre agents.

Morale among call centre staff was found to be very good with 66 per cent of agents rating their own morale as very or quite high and only 2 per cent saying morale is very low. Sixty per cent of agents were quite satisfied with their managers, more than 75 per cent were happy with their supervisors and almost 90 per cent expressed satisfaction with their colleagues.

The crucial ingredients for motivation were identified as effective communication, managing pressure, creating variety in roles, staff involvement and opportunities for continual development. Overall, agents feel most motivated when they are part of a team that is achieving good results and offering scope for improvement

The report entitled 'Working in Call Centres — A Study of management and Motivation in UK Customer Service Centres' is available from The Call centre Association, Strathclyde House, 6 Elm Bank Street, Glasgow G2 4PF.

Communication skills rated number one for managers

The findings of a national survey of 242 senior UK managers and directors from large and small firms has shown that regardless of size, region, or sector, there are no significant differences between all but one of the skills that managers rate most highly in other middle and senior managers. Conducted by Brunel University, the survey shows that communication skills are most frequently rated number one in importance — over one-third of the managers in the survey placed this at the top of their list of desirable skills. Team member skills are rated number one by almost a quarter of managers. Analytical and problem-solving skills are rated number one by one-fifth; while professional certified technical skills are number one for just 17 per cent. Presentational, negotiating, report writing, data and computer numeracy skills are of primary importance for just a very small minority of those surveyed and may not be central to the work of middle managers and above. Networking is the only skill that larger firms (of over 1,000 employees) place significantly higher in importance than smaller firms.

New guidelines for tanker operations

A team of specialists from the petroleum, chemical and waste management industries has developed a set of new guidelines for workers in those industries. This material will form the basis for a new National/Scottish Vocational Qualification. The new qualification — Transporting Goods by Road (Tanker Operations) — is founded on the Transporting Goods by Road (Level 2) NVQ/SVQ, developed by the Road Haulage & Distribution Training Council. The additional guidance covers all aspects of tanker operations, notably the special procedures relating to the transport of hazardous goods.

The new award will complement the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road certification procedures. These require drivers of tankers carrying hazardous goods to maintain valid ADR certification. The new award will be available throughout the UK and is being offered through a number of Awarding Bodies and a range of local training centres.

IT manager wins Young Women Engineer of the Year award

Kim Dennis, IT Specialist Skill Group Manager with Marconi Communications, has been named 1998 Young Woman Engineer of the Year. Kim began her career with GPT Ltd as a technical apprentice in 1988. After having gained an HND in Electrical and Telecommunications Engineering at Coventry College in 1992, Kim was appointed as System Support Specialist. In 1995 she moved on to the position of Team Leader for IT Specialists and later progressed to her current role as Skill Group Manager for IT Specialists, under the company's new title — Marconi Communications. As Skill Group Manager, Kim is responsible for the career development, pastoral care and discipline, resource management and workload scheduling of her team of twenty technical specialists. She is also heavily involved in project management, which involves preparing project briefs and plans, and monitoring and communicating each project's progress.

Jointly sponsored by The Institution of Incorporated Engineers and The Caroline Haslett Memorial Trust, this year's award attracted many contenders with a wide range of knowledge and experience in electronic, electrical and mechanical engineering.

Runner-up and winner of the Women into Science and Engineering prize was Catherine Day, a Senior Test Engineer with Millbrook Proving Ground Limited.

Kim Dennis

Care assistant is MA of the Year

Twenty-one year-old Claire Gaffing, a care assistant from Gateshead, received her Modern Apprentice of the Year 1998 award from Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett, at a ceremony held in London's Café Royal. Claire was nominated for the award because of the outstanding initiative she showed while taking the Modern Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care, developed by the Local Government NTO. As an employee of the Fell House Nursing Home she successfully devised and implemented a stock control system, which made the home a saving of £750 last year. Clare has become a role model and mentor for several of the other care staff at the home who are now following her though the vocational training route.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Blunkett announced that 10,000 new Modern Apprenticeships would be available this year, bringing the total to 82,000. There are currently 126,000 young people undertaking MAs in some 80 different industrial sectors.

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PROVEN TO WORK

Letter from the Editor

Hello and welcome to the March issue of *Training Journal*. In addition to our usual news roundup, reviews and contributions from regular columnists this issue is bursting with ideas, advice and comment.

This month we are bringing you a selection of articles about team development, including one about building the virtual team and another that focuses on using psychometric testing to facilitate a greater understanding between team members, of one another's roles, needs and expectations. 'Every picture tells a story' reveals how the use of collage, or creating pictures, in teambuilding courses, when accompanied by feedback, can prove to be a useful tool in developing group cohesion. It has also been shown to have important applications for use by trainers when running other courses, as does the use of visual images in facilitating a linking of learning.

Mergers and acquisitions have become a dominant feature of organisational life. 'What role for the training department in mergers and acquisitions?' reports on some of the findings of research carried out by Roffey Park Management Institute. One of the conclusions of the report is that mergers are most successful when the people issues are handled well. Trainers, known for their excellent communication skills, are seen as having a key role to play in creating the new culture and in providing a consultancy service to line managers, who are charged with communications in the early days post-merger. More about this on page 16.

Whether we communicate by e-mail, post or fax, the importance of reviewing our written work cannot be overstated. Tips and guidance on this topic begin on page 19. An article about self-motivation considers the factors that influence it, while 'Perception is paramount' explains the importance of happiness in life and the need to achieve a balance between home and work.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

Sylvia Worth

LETTERS

Send your letters to the Editor, Training Journal, Clive House, The Business Park, Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4EH.
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E-mail: trainingjournal@fenman.co.uk
Website: http://www.ukhrd.com

Dear Editor

The 1999 Directors' Centre survey on attitudes towards Entrepreneurship in Business is being carried out at the moment. Anyone interested in participating should contact The Directors' Centre on 01225 334560.

Robert Craven
The Directors' Centre
23 Solsbury Way, Bath BA1 6HH
Tel/fax: 01225 334560
E-mail: craven@directors-centre.demon.co.uk

.....

Dear Editor

Survey into learning skills/practices

I am conducting a worldwide survey into learning skills, using a short questionnaire. The results will be announced on 20 May, Learning at Work Day. Anyone can join in the survey (the more the merrier) by asking me for a copy of the questionnaire. It can either be posted, faxed or emailed.

Each person who joins in the survey will get feedback on his/her scores together with 'norms' so that they can benchmark themselves against a growing data base of results.

Please join in as part of your contribution to Learning at Work Day.

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UK-HRD snippets

This month we highlight a recent discussion that took place on UK-HRD about using Lego in training sessions.

If you're already on the Internet and want to keep in touch with fellow trainers, you have no excuse for not subscribing to UK-HRD. This on-line discussion forum, run as a free service to readers of Training Journal, now has more than five hundred subscribers. It's absolutely free and offers the opportunity to seek and gain advice, or simply express your point of view. For those of you who do not have access to the Net, we plan to feature some of the discussions that have taken place on-line. Here we look at the response that Raj Patel received to the following message he sent at the end of December, and the ensuing debate.

'Has anyone out there developed or used Lego for team exercises/team building/communication skills. I know about the tower! Anything different to that would be most welcome ... '

One contributor sent details of Lego exercise called 'Tanker Contact', in which two teams have instructions to build a ship to strict specifications, one with black Lego the other with blue. Halfway through the exercise the 'customer' who is the facilitator says that they now need the ship in corporate colours, which are obviously the opposite of those the team has. This has been used for leadership skills, team building, problem solving, and so on.

Geoff Claypole described a bridge building exercise, using Lego for the towers and Lego, Lego tracks and Lego carts for the transport vehicle. The aim is to build a bridge across a specified span and transport certain items by pulling the cart (with string/cotton) across and back as many times as time permits, or until complete. There is a set timescale for building and transporting, but teams are allowed to plan and practise before the timed event. The Lego bricks are 'sold' to the team at a rate per brick — so the more solid the construction the more expensive the cost. The items to transport vary in weight and carry a monetary reward for each one carried successfully. The heavier ones carry more reward — but result in more risk of the bridge collapsing, especially if it was built on the cheap, or in haste

Continued on page 9

Reality or denial: take your pick

Peter Honey BA (Psych), D Litt, Dip Ed, FIMC, FIPD, is a Chartered Psychologist and Management Consultant. He may be contacted on 01628 633946; fax 01628 633262; e-mail peterhoney@peterhoney.co.uk

I notice that when people say, usually with meaningful looks, 'Ah, of course he is in denial', it invariably refers to someone's inability to face up to reality. Leaving aside the not inconsiderable problem of what reality really is (for a psychologist to claim it is a philosophical problem, rather than a psychological one, is undoubtedly an example of denial), the assumption is that we'd all be better adjusted and better equipped to deal with reality if we faced up to it, warts and all.

I must say I have always had a sneaking admiration for denial. It has certainly stood me in good stead. Over the Christmas period I consistently denied that eating all those chocolates and consuming all those drinks caused me to put on weight. It is a family joke that I always manage to 'forget' the bad things and only remember the good. This, of course, makes the assumption that I even noticed the bad things in the first place and thus was in a position to 'forget' them. I am happily oblivious, unless reminded forcefully (which happens from time to time!) that despite getting married in the month of April, it snowed; that I once set fire to my baby daughter; that my whole family nearly perished in a lock on the Grand Union Canal when the bows of our narrow boat got stuck on the lock gates and so on. (If I tell you that I needed considerable coaching in order to write that last sentence, well, I rest my case!)

I fully appreciate (honest!) that denial can lead to serious consequences. Global warming is a good example. At present it is so subtle that it is easy to deny that our behaviour is bringing about an irreversible change to the world's climate. I was with a group of managers recently who flatly denied that sexual harassment ever happened in their factory, and this despite three recent first-hand accounts backed up by witnesses. Surely we have all had experiences of participants on courses who retreat into denial and blame the trainer for 'forcing' them to behave in totally uncharacteristic ways?

Being on the receiving end of feedback that can be construed as critical (in other words most of it, for most of the time) invariably stirs the old defence mechanisms. Certainly, when people criticise me, I'm brilliant at convincing myself (not necessarily them) that, in the circumstances, I did the best thing and that if only the other person had known the whole story, they would have thought better of me.

In recent weeks the signatories to the declaration on learning have been criticised, not just for the contents of the declaration, but for being white, middle aged and male, for being poor role models for learning, for being pompous enough to publish a declaration at all, and so on. In subsequent meetings of the declaration group we have slipped effortlessly into collective denial. People simply don't understand our laudable motives; they must be jealous and, as for being an all-male group, well, that's just because men have written more books on learning than women have. And then we pull ourselves together and make a conscious effort to face reality and deal with our critics non-defensively. But it isn't nearly so much fun as wallowing in denial!

Presumably, as 360 degree feedback methods become more widely used, we will need to brace ourselves for a surge in denial. I have collected some examples as people react to written reports based on assessments from their managers, colleagues, subordinates, and Uncle Tom Cobley and all. Just look at how creatively people swing into denial mode.

'The trouble is my respondents don't really know me that well.'
'My job makes me act this way: I'm not really like this.'
'All my strengths are spot on but they've got my weaknesses wrong.'
'I used to be this way but I've changed recently.'
'The wrong people obviously filled out the questionnaire.'
'My boss marked me down because he/she doesn't like me.'
'I wasn't like this in my last job.'
'I've got global responsibilities and my respondents don't speak English very well.'
'It's just that I've got a reputation to keep up; I'm actually much nicer than this.'
'I purposely picked people who don't like me.'
'People are just jealous of my success.'
'This must be someone else's report.'
'The computer must have scored this wrong.'

In the face of all this accomplished denial, I always urge people to assume that perceptions are reality and that, when other people's perceptions don't coincide with your own, you need to modify your behaviour in order to stand a chance of modifying the erroneous perception. But it's tough isn't it? It is so much easier to claim that everyone else is wrong and you are right.

Perhaps Liza Minnelli advocates the best way to deal with reality when she says: 'Reality is something you rise above.' ■

Teambuilding: don't confuse the sizzle with the steak!

Here **Robert Craven** discusses what teambuilding is — and what it is not.

Winter is here, I can tell! Since the end of October, everyone seems to be talking about 'teambuilding'. People talk with a new vigour and determination to 'really make things work this time'.

The request for teambuilding programmes reflects that there's something amiss in the organisation; the request is usually a symptom of something that is fundamentally wrong in the business. And if it is true that the need simply reflects a more deep-seated problem, then a quick-fix programme will not solve it.

If you are serious about sorting out your team issues then the good news is that you are not alone; hundreds of delegates pass through just such consultancy and training programmes every day, but maybe the real issue is about the effectiveness of such activity.

If you are serious about doing the job properly then you need to be systematic in your approach; decide your objectives and be clear about how you will determine whether the programme has been successful.

Robert Craven MBA MIMC CMC, is a consultant with an international reputation. He is Associate Fellow at Warwick Business School and Visiting Professor at Toulouse Business School. He runs The Directors' Centre, the entrepreneurship consultants. He may be contacted on 01225 334560 or (craven@directors-centre.demon.co.uk).

Rising to the challenge

One option often advocated to resolve the teambuilding conundrum is what is euphemistically described (for trademark reasons) as 'working in challenging environments' or 'working outside'.

The argument goes that managers have to work in a constantly challenging and changing environment and they need to be able to respond quickly; so, put them in an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar challenges and they can learn from their experiences — 'using transferable skills', whatever that means. This was recently described to me by an eminent banker client as 'going to the Lake District to bite the heads off rabbits'!

Just because the England football team and the Shadow Cabinet have done it, doesn't mean it works.

If you are serious about sorting out your team issues then the good news is that you are not alone

Which leads us to consider what we mean by 'works' ... I have no problem with the notion that a careful debriefing will improve our understanding of ourselves and how we behave; however, I find it difficult to understand how all this impacts on the 'bottom line'. If an organisation has deep-seated problems then how will making managers pump high levels of adrenalin around their bodies for a long weekend help their overall performance? And what about the poor soul who feels that the whole experience borders on bullying or is totally irrelevant to their ability to sell laptop computers in the Milton Keynes regional network?

Or am I missing the point? Is the 'managing in a challenging environment' thing just a 'jolly' dressed in a management development programme's clothing? If that's the case, then I have no problems; I'm only concerned when trainers oversell the benefits of such activity.

To digress, I am the first to admit that several years ago I did my bit in Wales, abseiling, pot-holing, caving and solving ridiculous riddles. And I loved every minute of it; in fact, on the second evening I could hardly sleep because my brain was desperately trying to make sense of a thousand issues.

Just because the England football team and the Shadow Cabinet have done it, doesn't mean it works.

And when I got home, I hit my entire family with endless tales of every minute detail of my life-changing experience. I simply couldn't wait to get to work to try out my newly acquired insights into the intricacies of the human psyche. Yes, I was fired-up and 'ready to go'! Yes, I wanted to really improve my relationships and the way I handled others! But maybe they weren't ready for the new me!

All I know is that very rapidly my enthusiasm waned. The team lost the impetus that it had at the peak of the experience and I still had a small scar on my knee where I had cut myself.

Rehabilitation

If I could re-run the event described above I would like to see some kind of longer-term rehabilitation programme to integrate what I had learnt into my day-to-day work.

And, back to my argument. Some teambuilding programmes do not seem to cover the basics.

To manage the team effectively you need to understand:

- the significance of 'the team'
- the power of a 'self-managing team'
- what makes the team 'effective'
- how to achieve 'good teamwork'
- how to analyse and review team performance, and
- how to put your learning into practice.

To build a team you need to establish some sense of urgency and direction; set performance-related tasks and goals; get people to work together and build networks; and don't emphasise hierarchies.

Use consultancy and training programmes to build relationships between

To build a team you need to establish some sense of urgency and direction

the individuals. Often the real value of a programme is just that — the building of relationships. This is a far more significant output than the specific ('transferable') skills and knowledge you are meant to be gaining. And if that really is the case, why not spend the money sending them on a proper 'jolly' — I hear Butlin's is a lot of fun these days!

Do use teambuilding programmes to supplement other approaches but do not rely on them to have any effect unless they will convey messages that are consistent with your organisation's culture and values. Don't confuse the sizzle with the steak. ■

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Training and maintaining the virtual team

Over the past twenty years, teamworking has become a way of life in most organisations. Walk into any company and you will find groups of people working closely together, perhaps brainstorming ideas or planning a project. But with developments in technology, a new type of team is emerging — the virtual team. Here, **Shirley Pickering** outlines some of the issues facing a virtual team and advises on suitable training programmes.

Having graduated with a BSc in Psychology in 1990, Shirley Pickering joined the Prudential Corporation, where she was involved in a number of change management programmes, as well as extensive recruitment and selection. After completing an MSc in Personnel Management and Business Administration at Aston University Business School, Shirley joined Cambridge Management Centres in 1994. Shirley can be contacted on 01908 675050 or by e-mail on mail@askeruope.com

A manager is preparing for his (or her) monthly team meeting. Having looked over the points recorded in the team's discussion database and checked his most recent e-mails, he switches on the video conferencing system on his desktop PC and dials up his colleagues.

Welcome to the world of virtual teamworking, where team members rarely meet face to face but communicate electronically. Characterised by the use of a wide range of technologies, virtual teams are made up of members who are located in different geographical sites, often dispersed around the globe. Team members not only operate in isolation, but also are likely to have to interact with people they hardly know — all the while grappling with different methods of communication and working with complex reporting structures. It is a way of working that adds a new layer of complexity to remote working — and to the training needs of the team.

A training officer faced with the need to develop a programme for a virtual team needs to focus on teambuilding and interpersonal skills. Because the virtual team will be heavily dependent on technology, there is a danger that the team members themselves will concentrate on that technology, on getting their systems working efficiently, and will forget the human element.

We all know that in high performance teams, members are committed to the team's goals, are supportive of one another, are open and honest, and — most of all — have fun. Yet such an environment requires a degree of trust that can be difficult to build in a virtual team. No matter how much training is given on the technology, a virtual team will struggle if the human element is forgotten.

It is very easy to nominate a virtual team and launch straight into activity, but that activity cannot be managed effectively unless a community is created. Obtaining buy-in and developing trust are essential.

So training needs to begin in a traditional teambuilding way, with team events. These could include psychometric tests, so that each member can understand his or her own style and approach, and the styles and approaches of colleagues. Exercises that help team members understand one another can be expanded to simulate virtual working. In this way, the entire team has an opportunity, while they are together, to look at how working virtually is going to operate; and, with feedback sessions, exchange ideas and opinions and discuss the issues directly with one another.

Soft skills-based training is also important at this stage. For example, communication skills need to be developed so that the members of a virtual team can understand how they can get across the intention of their messages to each other, and relate messages clearly and sensitively. Here the different media — e-mail, video conferencing, the telephone — need to be studied and an understanding developed of what works in which medium. One of the problems that can arise from communicating via technology is that it can be unexpectedly hard to get the message across. Not everyone is good at expressing themselves through the written word, and without visual clues it can be hard to gauge others' reactions. Even video conferencing does not fully replace face-to-face meetings, as the situation is artificial and can influence the way in which some people present themselves.

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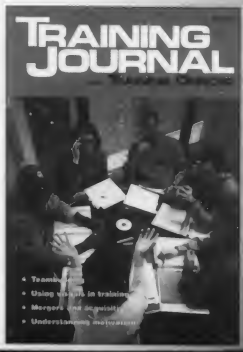

Similarly, training in knowledge management can help virtual teams understand the importance of, and develop strategies for, capturing and sharing knowledge.

Influencing skills are also a key area for training, so that virtual team members are aware of how they can sell and promote an idea within the team, and are encouraged to think more carefully about how they interact with their colleagues, given the constraints of technology. And, with each member working in geographical isolation with little or no supervision, time management and organisation skills need to be included in the early stages of training.

With this training and these skills in place, one can then turn to the technological skills required for effective virtual team working. Technology is going to be the foundation of any virtual team, and members have to know how to make the maximum use of it.

Overlaying all this training is the essential need for leadership development. More than any other type of team, the virtual team needs a strong leader who can keep all the elements together, who is really interested in the people element of the team, and who can help its members develop and build.

The team leader has to be trained and prepared to spend time agreeing goals and objectives with his or her colleagues. Unless they have a common understanding of why they exist, they are even more likely to start pulling in different directions than those in a traditional team. Hard work on the part of the team leader is needed to ensure that everyone understands the team's purpose and direction. Without this clear focus and direction, there is a danger that team members will find themselves being caught up in their local environment and lose sight of the bigger picture.

Roles and responsibilities also have to be clearly defined within the team. With members not seeing one another regularly, it is easy to duplicate work. One way round this is to create a structure for the team, appointing project leaders where necessary, so that members do not lose touch with priorities.

The leader also has to be aware that virtual teams miss out on those chance meetings by the coffee machine or in the office corridor, where often the most productive ideas are developed. Nothing happens by accident in a virtual team, so opportunities have to be created for informal discussion otherwise members can become rigid in their working practices and team spirit is lost. For example, team members should be encouraged to telephone one another and not simply rely on e-mail for communication. In this way, informal discussion and exchange of ideas is generated.

In addition, teambuilding should become a fairly regular event so that team members can meet face to face to focus on how they are working together, and what is and is not operating effectively within the team.

At these events, it is not a bad idea to take a leaf out of the sales and marketing book. In a typical sales force, reps only see each other at annual conferences, so a lot of social activity is built in during these meetings. The teambuilding value contributed by these social aspects of a meeting can be extremely effective.

Virtual teams are likely to become an ever more significant part of working life as we enter the age of the global village. They provide many benefits to an organisation. First and foremost is the availability of talented staff. If someone has been identified as the best person for the role, there is no guarantee they will relocate.

New technology enables companies to form teams according to business needs, not location, and adopting a virtual team strategy increases a company's ability to attract and retain the best possible talent. This access to expertise, in whatever location, provides a second benefit — giving a company the competitive edge.

With careful training, early, practical intervention and preparation and adequate support, virtual teams can operate effectively and efficiently. But to develop truly high-performing virtual teams, significant time has to be invested in the appropriate training, and the building and maintaining of working relationships.

Team members must get to know one another, know their colleagues' personalities and preferred ways of working, and be committed to and buy into the team and what it is trying to achieve. ■

Continued from page 4

UK-HRD snippets

Garry Platt described another exercise called 'The Tower of Chaos'. Details of this can be obtained from Garry on tel 01926 336621; fax 01926 450648.

Gary Beharrell has ventured into using a 'Technical Lego' set for tasks. This introduces such things as gears, pneumatics, and various other types of mechanical elements. He recommends some of the larger kits, which are now available, for the exercises — and even suggests that someone should talk to Lego about producing a trainer's set.

This talk about Lego sparked a debate about the use of 'games' in training. Hilary Groombridge said that she finds participants are sometimes critical of exercises that make use of Lego bricks, because they find them childish. When she has carried out similar exercises (building bridges, towers, moving vehicles) using other equipment such as paper, paperclips, plastic beakers, and other materials readily available in an office environment, she had not encountered this reaction. Her question to the network was 'Has this happened to anyone else?' In her response Linda Bryant said that although she doesn't use Lego in training sessions, she uses coloured wooden bricks (designed for children over 36 months) for a game on communications/giving instruction/structuring a presentation. She commented that no one had ever said that it was childish — unless they had simply looked on and not participated.

Interestingly, Mark Briegal asked: 'Are people with small children more likely to do well in these exercises, just because they are very good at building Lego?'

Garry Platt responded to a point raised about viewing certain activities as either 'games' or developmental processes. In brief, he recommended that trainers should:

- explain the role and purpose of the activities up front
- make sure people have a basic understanding of how we learn from experience (learning styles/cycle)
- never refer to the activities as games
- make sure that in the debriefs to the activities the relationships are drawn out between what happened during the activity and what happens back in the work place. Also show how it was overcome, or could be overcome, and again relate this back to actions which should, or do, take place back in the workplace.

A host of other topics were discussed on-line during January and February, ranging from finding a suitable training venue to listening exercises, learning styles and learning cycles, through to mentoring/coaching and call centre training.

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Teams: understanding behaviours

Freya Williams describes an approach that may be taken to build effective teams, based on the use of psychometric testing that creates an understanding of the inherent differences between team members and their resulting behaviours.

Before designing a programme for teamwork, — that is, enabling individuals to work effectively with other people either as a team leader or team member — we must first examine the various approaches that may be taken. In his book, Will Schutz describes commonly used methods that in his opinion should not be used; these are:

- Coerce — "People are hired and paid to work together; if they don't, fire them and hire people who will!"
- Compromise — "It is perfectly natural for people to disagree. When you are at work, forget about your disagreements; be respectful of each other. It is important to recognise and appreciate differences and to compromise our differences for the good of the team."
- Complement — "Recognition of diversity allows us to divide the task so that people do the things they are good at and complement the other team members."

When developing teams we may focus on giving people information about the way teams function, so that they have an intellectual understanding of the reasons for difficulties they may have relating to others in the workplace. This knowledge will help them to know which behaviours will improve their situation.

Understanding how teams work is usually very helpful for improving team output, especially in the short term. Research shows that this is more likely to give a success rating of 75 per cent.

Some organisations create teams where team members have not worked together previously such as project teams, especially cross-functional teams. In such team situations, research has shown that by leaving the team to 'get on' only 50 per cent of them will be successful.

Concordant decision-making

For a deeper, more lasting solution to the problems confronted by teams we need to look at concordant decision-making.

Organisational decision-making is commonly authoritarian. In this mode, one vote, the boss's, determines the decision. This often happens in SMEs and owner-driven companies. The preferred method, taken by boards, committees and democratic bodies, is the vote of the majority — that is more than half. What would happen in a properly participative team, one in which all members are asked for their input? How would we arrive at consensus decision-making?

To achieve a collective opinion, the team would need to be empowered and taught to work well together in an open and creative atmosphere. Concordant decision-making is a method that provides a structure, so enabling team members to make full use of their creativity and logic by capitalising on their ability to speak honestly to each other. This method encourages the team to stimulate one another, so that they arrive at solutions that probably none of them would have thought of alone.

Let's look at how this might show itself in the team by looking at atmosphere compatibility.

Atmosphere or cultural compatibility

One popular theory of compatibility is reflected in the phrase 'Birds of a feather flock together'. This is true when members of our team prefer the same atmosphere or 'climate' or 'context'; in this situation we have a common basis on which to resolve differences.

Freya Williams, BA, FIPD, FRSA has over twenty years experience in human resources. She is fully qualified in using psychometric assessment material, and uses these skills in recruitment and coaching for personal development. Freya has been a follower of the Schutz approach for the past fifteen years. She may be contacted on 01787 463646.

Using Schutz's definitions, the atmospheres that form the bases for team decision-making are defined by *Inclusion*, *Control* and *Openness*. Atmosphere preferences are shown in Table 1.

Inclusion atmosphere
An atmosphere of high inclusion occurs when we have lots of contact, frequent meetings, communicate well and interact a great deal. An atmosphere of low inclusion describes a situation in which our contact is low. We hardly see each other, we may be teleworking, we may have separate offices; we may even have our own tasks, which are completed in private.

Inclusion *incompatibility* occurs when one individual likes lots of contact, while another prefers to work alone in his/her own office. (This is similar to the difference that exists between introverts and extroverts.) The difficulty arises when the two people have disagreements. One wants to solve them by talking and meeting and the other individual wants to solve them through isolated individual action. This leads to an impasse.

Control atmosphere
An atmosphere of high control exists where there is a strict hierarchy within the organisation or team. There is a clear line of authority and an expectation that the leader will give orders and the team will comply.

An atmosphere of low control exists where there is a minimal hierarchy, or a flat structure; this is often found in young IT software companies. Plans are made at the last minute and there is a *laissez-faire* attitude.

Control atmosphere *incapability* occurs when one individual wants a clear structure and everything planned out ahead (he/she may be the Finance Director, for example) and the others want a democratic approach. The Finance Director wants the leader to make a decision and everyone else wants to discuss what to do next!

Openness atmosphere
An atmosphere of high openness exists when we are open about expressing our feelings and fears. In such a situation the Finance Director can be open about his/her worries about the bank balance and the Sales Director can be open about not getting the big sale he/she had forecast. A no-blame atmosphere is needed for this to work well.

Low openness atmosphere exists in an organisation in which 'personal relationships' on or off the job are discouraged. This could be described as 'business-like' — that is, 'Leave your personal worries at home, you are here to work.'

Openness incompatibility happens when one individual wants a good discussion about his/her relationship with another person who prefers to stick to the business agenda. It also shows itself where one individual wants to consider the feelings of the team, while another just wants to get the job done, no matter how. In order to achieve high openness, the team members must feel safe from being fired or ostracised — that is, there must be a culture of no blame.

Role compatibility

Atmosphere compatibility refers to the climate, culture or ground rules within which we interact — the stage setting. Role compatibility refers to the parts we play with respect to each other as we interact.

As shown below, there are two types of role incompatibility.

- *Confrontive* where we both want to initiate behaviour and neither of us wants to receive it. It leads to open confrontation, or power struggles or subtle manoeuvring. Examples of confrontive role incompatibility are shown in Figure 1.
- *Apathetic* where we both want to receive behaviour and neither of us wants to initiate it. This is more covert and harder to identify; its most noticeable symptom is apathy, and nothing gets done. Either I 'forget' to do something or 'think you were doing it'. Examples of apathetic role incompatibility are shown in Figure 2.

Examples of inclusion compatability/incompatability are given below.

- *Inclusion role compatibility occurs* when I like to invite you to meetings and you are happy to be there.
- *Inclusion confrontive incompatibility* occurs when we both want to initiate the meetings, but don't want to be just invited. We both want to choose where we go and with whom.
- *Inclusion apathetic incompatibility* occurs when we both want to be asked but neither of us was; we both hung back. For example, we would like a meeting to discuss the new project but neither of us made the effort to contact the other.

Examples of control compatability/incompatability are given below.

- *Control role compatibility* occurs when one likes to give direction and the other likes to take it — an ideal mentoring project!
- *Control confrontive incompatibility* is when we have a power struggle because we both want to give direction. We may well become over focused and miss the point of the argument.
- *Control apathetic incompatibility* happens when we both want to be told what to do. This can be seen in teams with an indecisive leader and unimaginative team members.

Examples of openness compatability/incompatability are given below.

- *Openness role compatibility* means that we both like to initiate a degree of openness and are both satisfied with that. We have a relaxed chat about all things and are not scared to admit failure.
- *Openness confrontive incompatibility* occurs when one individual decides not to initiate openness with some people — that is, he/she chooses. This can be disruptive in teams when one

Table 1. Atmosphere preferences

Area	Atmosphere
High inclusion	Together
Low Inclusion	Alone
High Control	Hierarchy
Low Control	Flow both ways
High openness	Open, communicative
Low openness	Businesslike, one way communication

person can 'confide' in a few people but not all the team.
- *Openness apathetic incompatibility* means that all parties would really like to have an open relationship but are too scared to initiate it. This can happen in a blame culture. As an external consultant I am often told lots of things that everyone in the team needs to know, which individual members do not reveal to one another.

A psychometric instrument, such as *Firo-Element B*, which gives objective measurements to the team can be used to measure the above. It is particularly useful when working with newly composed teams and car also be used if there are two members of a team causing great difficulties for the remainder. Feedback and a discussion, using examples from the workplace, follow the testing.

This approach allows the team to explore their behaviours in working together but it is through a measurement that is non-confrontational. It can appeal especially to those liking figures as a base starting point. The facilitator could explain the inclusion, control and openness described here and ask the team how it can put things right.

Accompanying theory

How many times have you been 'told' to go to a meeting rather than wanting to go? Commitment, for individuals, is about wondering how much energy they will devote to the meeting or team, how much time they will put in and take from other activities. If, for example, an individual who wants to be captain of a team thinks he/she may not be, then he/she might make excuses not to go; alternatively if elected captain, the same individual is likely to pour in lots of energy to the project!

Understanding how teams work is usually very helpful for improving team output, especially in the short term.

As a facilitator, it is good to watch how the team gets to know one another during stage 1 (the inclusion phase). We find that it is often through discussing other trivia, such as holidays for example. Observe, for instance, how committed people are. Do they come unprepared? Do they falter? How punctual are they? Do they really want to be there?

Stage 2 is about levels of responsibility, competition to be leader, methods for decision-making and distribution of power. How much power and responsibility is each individual happy with? One person may want the team to admire him/her, so might show off or name drop. If one of the team members is not happy with the leader, he/she may be very critical and blame others. Many team members feel like leaving at this point, but rarely do.

Stage 3 is the most advanced stage and only happens when all the issues with the first two stages are dealt with. The boundaries are set, but the team needs to decide how open it will really be.

Individuals may ask the following questions. Shall we keep it superficial?; this is, after all, work. Would the team still respect or like me if they knew all about me? Can I really tell them that the big sale I promised in the budgets isn't going to happen and why?

It is a good idea to get the team to discuss these three stages, if it is a new team, what do they expect to happen? If it is an existing team, then get plenty of behavioural examples to illustrate these areas.

Training objectives

The objectives of the training are to:
- develop a better *understanding* of team colleagues, their roles, their needs and expectations
- improve skills at *communicating* thoughts and feelings about self and colleagues
- identify own *strengths* in team activity and learn to apply them
- recognise own *limitations* and the implications
- develop own *confidence* in contributing to and influencing team colleagues
- develop a *climate* of co-operation and *trust* within the team
- develop an *action plan* for improving team effectiveness at work.

Conclusion

Failure to be aware of atmosphere, or cultural, differences in a team leads to confusion, disagreement about each specific issue and lowered productivity. More time and energy is spent on personal disagreements than getting the team to finish the work. Unless, therefore, the team recognises this and deals with it directly, it will have difficulty agreeing on the details of the project. ■

Inclusion	'Don't call me, I'll call you.'
Control	'I'm in charge here. Don't tell me what to do.'
Openness	'I want you to know how I feel about this.' 'I don't want to hear about your feelings.'

Figure 1. Examples of confrontive role incompatibility

Inclusion	'Call me, I won't call you.'
Control	'Tell me what to do.' 'I won't tell you what to do.'
Openness	'Tell me about yourself; I won't tell you about me.'

Figure 2. Apathetic role incompatibility

Reference

1 Will Schutz, *The Human Element Workbook*, Jossey-Bass, 1994.

Will Schutz is the founder of the psychometric tool, Firo B, and has in the last twelve years brought this up to date by developing it into Firo-Element B. Trainers may like to read *Joy*, also written by Will Schutz and published by Ten Speed Press, 1989.

Team Focus Ltd offers a one-day workshop, which provides training in using the psychometric tool Firo-Element B. A five-day training course looks in depth at concordance decision-making and is especially useful for those going in to deep counselling work with teams.

Every picture tells a story

Methods that can help participants on training courses to make the link between any new learning and its use back in the workplace are always useful. **Derek Adams** has found that using pictures and images in course materials has a definite advantage in helping to make that link.

If you think of pictures and images as 'empty' containers where participants have to contribute their own experiences to make sense of the situation shown, then to misquote a well known saying, 'Meaning is always in the eye of the beholder'. The advantage of this is that if trainers can select an image that is significant to the person, but sufficiently neutral, then participants are free to put in aspects of their own workplace experience and start to explore the relevance for themselves.

I first became interested in using pictures and images in training when, as an introductory exercise, I was asked to make a collage with my partner. We were given a pile of magazines, scissors and glue, and let loose. I always remembered that exercise and, when I started designing training courses myself, especially teambuilding events, I started using collage again.

I was always impressed by how involved everyone became in producing their collage, how much fun it was, and particularly how much personal, significant and often sensitive information participants revealed when they were explaining the choice of certain images.

There are two parts to this exercise, both important. The first is composing the collage, and the second is getting explanations from participants — why they chose particular pictures, and their significance. Through the use of this method I came to realise that the feedback sessions were particularly important, and it was essential to allow enough time to get full explanations.

There are some drawbacks — it is quite a time-consuming process, especially if you have a large group and want to provide opportunities to facilitate feedback from all the pictures, and it is important to do this.

Some participants experience this method as quite risky and revealing. Pictures don't convey such specific meanings as words; there can be a number of interpretations and propositions about meaning and this degree of flexibility doesn't suit everyone. Some people produce collages that remain quite literal — 'I like gardening' — picture of a garden; 'I enjoy wine' — picture of a wine bottle. However, the majority of participants enjoy the opportunity to select images that hold a particular meaning or significance. Often in their selection and composition they will play and have fun through the pictures, which can be humorous with a fair helping of self-parody.

Following one workshop, a participant commented, 'Experimenting with using images rather than just having to use words can be more daring and risky', and her colleague added, 'But it brings it to life more'. 'Yes.'

The level of disclosure of personal and sensitive information is quite surprising for a gathering of people who are in the early stages of getting to know each other, and my previous experience as both as a participant and a facilitator of groups is that it usually takes much longer when not using images. It is interesting to ask why this happens, and again quotes from participants following workshops can help give some clues as outlined below.

'Doing this reminds me how useful this is; emotional issues are often difficult to put into words; this can get to personal issues very quickly and very powerfully.'

After a career as a psychiatric social worker and an area manager for a housing association, Derek Adams set up Focus practice consultancy in 1995. Working mostly with social care organisations he currently runs training and consultancy in mental health, staff skills and management development. He can be contacted on 0117 963 1446; fax 0117 953 7079.

I think what happens is that people use pictures as a symbolic way of helping them to talk about events that have some emotional resonance. In selecting a picture they are enabled to use what the picture or character represents to help them give voice to a particular issue. Media figures often appear; as an example, Billy Connolly is quite a favourite for a number of men who use him and his particular characteristics and qualities to share that part of their character or personality.

In writing this article I'm aware that we often use symbolic means of expressing emotions — for example, flowers convey joy, grief, celebration, achievement; chocolates are for appreciation; wine, a cigar and many others are significant symbols for significant moments. I think there is something of a similar process happening when people select pictures and images, but in getting individual feedback, the facilitator asks about the specific meaning that is being conveyed.

This is very helpful in terms of group cohesion. If there are people who share personal information about themselves and how they feel or react to things, it can be very facilitative for a group starting to work together and becoming productive.

Although it is probably clear I'm quite an enthusiast for this method of working, most of that enjoyment has also been shared by participants. Producing a collage was almost always evaluated highly, and often cited as the most enjoyable part of the event.

I use this approach in teambuilding events, where there is usually some time to develop ideas, and a need to create some group cohesion. However, when I was asked to run more one-day training courses, I wondered whether there was a way in which the benefits of working with pictures could be maintained, but in a more focused and less time-consuming way.

When participants come on short one- or two-day training courses they, and particularly their managers, tend to want learning, skills and techniques that have a lot of practical use and can be used, back in the workplace, the very next day!

Working with this requirement, anything that can help them link new learning and ideas with usual practice in their workplace can be particularly useful. This is much more likely if you can get them to talk about their own experience, and consider the new material, by holding the two possibilities — their experience and new learning — at the same time.

In providing training for adults I have found that courses go much better if you encourage participants to contribute their personal experience. They tend to value the training more highly and, I would argue, get involved in the process of evaluating new learning in the light of what they already know.

Research evidence from group work shows that people in groups who have more to say always value the group, its benefits and their contribution more highly than those who haven't said much. I would think the same is probably true for training groups as well.

Some participants are very able to contribute their experience in the course setting, but not all. This is another reason for my favouring the use of visual images in much of my course material and I consider they have some particular advantages.

As an example: on a recent course I was running I distributed the handout in Figure 1 and asked participants to 'picture' themselves running an initial assessment interview. The aim was to get them to produce a standard interview 'prompt sheet' so that they would remember to collect essential information. I have run this and similar exercises many times, and they always seem to work well and enable participants to think themselves into the actual situation.

There are a number of reasons why I think this works well. Using a visual image such as this helps participants recall an actual interview situation and recollect the questions that would be important. It can be argued that many people can recreate pictures in their minds anyway, without the help of visuals. This is true, but not everyone has developed this aptitude for visualisation and some need this sort of help as a prompt, to help their thinking and access the memory and experience.

The other advantage is that visual images like this are empty containers and have no particular significance until it is personalised by the course participant.

Figure 1 suggests that an interview is taking place. But what sort of interview? Where it is happening and what sort of questions are being asked would all have to be contributed by the participants. They are likely to give it their own meaning and so make it relevant to them and their situation.

On one course a participant criticised the number of interviewers in the picture, and suggested that the interviewee would be totally overwhelmed. Most people don't take it in such a literal way, but that sort of reaction shows the involvement with the material which is very useful for prompting thought and discussion about good practice.

The point about individual meaning and how this can be revealed through personal experience is crucial in getting participants to consider current learning

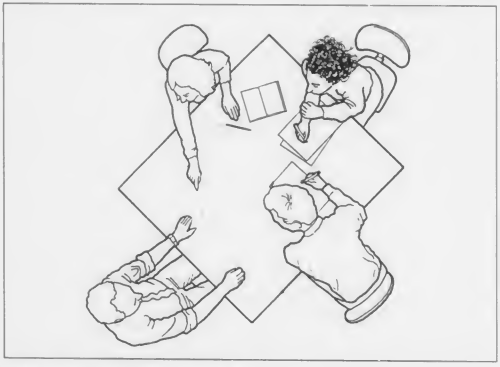

Figure 1. Interview questions prompt list

and new ideas. The sum of people's learning to date is their experience and, like us, they trust their own experience and don't give it up lightly until a better idea comes along that can be accepted. If the examples that a trainer introduces don't fit with their experience closely enough, new ideas can be rejected. Visual images only have meaning when people use them to create their own scenario and make their own sense. In this way it is similar to the experience of making a collage and getting feedback.

In another course, I needed to devise some training material for housing workers who were having to attend review meetings with health professionals to discuss clients' progress and plan for the future. My suspicion was that these meetings could be quite intimidating, and I wanted to encourage discussion of both good and bad practice, and hear how the workers felt about attending. Figure 2 shows the handout I provided and I asked participants to 'picture' themselves attending a meeting or having received an invitation to attend. I then asked for their feelings about past meetings, giving their good and bad experiences and suggesting ways in which their attendance could be made more productive.

Again, this approach seemed to work well, moving from initial amusement, to a productive discussion, on the benefits of clarity, purpose and good preparation in advance of the meeting. On checking progress during the exercise, I was gratified to see that one participant had inserted the actual names of health professionals she worked with next to the characters, so the links between the training and actual work were made very easily. This example could be adapted to any work group or any situation to help anticipate a difficult meeting.

Using visual images such as these is fun, unexpected and usually appreciated. The method is very participative and facilitates a linking of learning on the course and experience back at the workplace.

There are some similarities that can be made with brainstorming, and some course members had made this comparison themselves. In one teambuilding event, a participant remarked that it was like brainstorming, but much better, and I believe it is. My experience of brainstorming is that participants can get bogged down quite quickly with words and, although offering the opportunity to be productive, the results are less impressive.

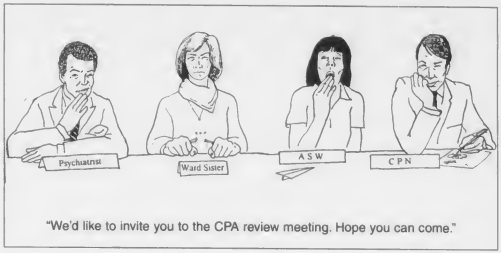

Figure 2. Attending a review meeting with senior staff to discuss clients' progress

With pictures and images the flow of connected possibilities and the resonances are much freer, and the method doesn't interrupt the flow of thought in the way a brainstorming exercise can.

There are a number of other writers who have pointed to the benefits of using pictures and drawings to aid explanations. Gareth Morgan's book *Imaginization*[1] is almost all about the use of drawings to help individuals and groups to explain their current situation and indicate what changes would improve practice. Tony Buzan in *The Mindmap Book*[2] gives lots of examples of maps and 'notes' from great thinkers where it is shown that by using both words and pictures they use a greater part of the capacity of the brain to thinking creatively.

In *Systems, Management and Change: A Graphic Guide*[3] the OU Systems Group — Ruth Carter, John Martin, Bill Mayblin and Michael Munday — have effectively used pictures and images throughout the book to explain systems analysis and change.

I consider all these approaches to be very rich and I have drawn on them extensively.

The only disadvantage in using drawings, however, is that some participants are sensitive about any artistic talent or lack any skill at drawing at all. In a short training course, pictures depicting certain situations or incidents can be more useful and gets over this potential problem.

When using collage there is that added advantage, or limitation of risk, and so it depends on your skill and confidence as a facilitator, particularly in running the feedback session and the purpose of your training. Using images such as the examples shown here are much more specific; you just ask the participants to relate it to their particular situations, and most can manage that.

I have used this approach on many occasions and usually incorporate similar exercises in most courses, always trying to make a link with a 'back in the workplace situation.'

It might be that this is an approach you use already as a trainer, and in that case you probably don't need any further convincing. However, if not, I would like to add that I have found it to be not only a very useful way of presenting course materials, but also personally interesting in my search to find the picture or graphic that captures the issue I'm trying to present.

Once the benefits of the approach are recognised, many ways can be found of including it in course material, and this is only limited by the trainer's creativity and imagination. ■

References

1 Morgan, Gareth, *Imaginization*, Sage Publications, 1993.
2 Buzan, Tony *The Mindmap Book*, BBC Books, 1993.
3 Carter R, Martin J, Mayblin B, Munday M, *Systems, Management and Change*, Open University course book, Paul Chapman Publishing, 1984.

*The author acknowledges the use of the diagrams in this article taken from *Systems, Management and Change* and used by kind permission of the Open University.

What role for the training department in a merger or acquisition?

The experience of individuals in organisations before, during and after a merger can be very debilitating. Roffey Park has carried out an eighteen-month study* to investigate the impact on people of such momentous change and to discover ways in which individuals can emerge effectively in the new organisation, contributing fully to an integrated culture. **Valerie Garrow** and **Linda Holbeche** discuss the findings.

Valerie Garrow BA, MSc, is a researcher at Roffey Park Management Institute. Since joining Roffey Park in 1993, Valerie has carried out research on a variety of projects including equal opportunities, 360-degree feedback, self-directed teams and, most recently, mergers and acquisitions.

Linda Holbeche BA, MA, is Director of Research at Roffey Park. Linda joined Roffey Park in 1994. Her key research interests include 'Career Development in Flatter Structures' and 'International Leadership'. She has produced several major research reports and her recent book Motivating People in Lean Organisations *was shortlisted for the MCA Prize for best management book.*

One of the difficulties for organisations undergoing their first merger is that line managers may not have the experience or skills required to tackle the psychological waves of change which begin to hit the various levels of the workforce at different times.

In the pre-merger phase, communication, though vital, is usually scant. For instance, there may be little or no warning of the merger announcement. Our research found cases where employees first heard the news of the merger driving to work and were no more knowledgeable than other members of the public. In one example, there was no formal announcement for three days. Difficult then for an employee, as an official representative of his or her organisation, to present a confident face to the angry customer who had also just heard the news.

Managing the human impact of change

Mergers are essentially change management exercises writ large. In the early days following the announcement, people are alert to the potential impact of the change. How will their job, employment security and career prospects be affected? Typically, the answers to these questions take time to become clear. In the meantime, uncertainty, suspicion and 'wait and see' approaches can sap employee morale.

Where people perceive themselves to be on the 'losing' side of the merger, they may experience a state of 'denial' similar to that described by Elizabeth Kubler-Rosse in her findings about people who have suffered a bereavement. When one pharmaceutical company acquired another company renowned for its research and development, employees in the acquired organisation surprised management by 'burying their babies' — hiding their good ideas until they were sure that there was a role for them in the combined company.

In the Roffey Park research, senior people described being sucked into dealing with operational issues and the mechanics of mergers. It was only with the benefit of hindsight that they realised that understanding and managing people's perceptions and expectations were equally vital to promoting a healthy emergent organisation. In such cases the training department may well be involved in a counselling role, providing forums for exploring the many emotions experienced, and helping individuals to come to terms with change and upheaval.

What has become apparent from the research is that most employees are impacted by a merger at some stage, if

*The research involved developing thirteen case studies, of which nine are published in the report *Mergers and Acquisitions: getting the people bit right*. In addition, a learning community was formed comprising senior managers with experience of mergers or acquisitions. The research team looked at best practice as well as initiatives that had not been successful and the learning gained from such experiences. We believe that it is possible to manage a merger effectively, and that the HR and training departments have a key role to play in the development of an integrated culture.

not initially. It seems that even people who consider themselves to have benefited from the merger undergo a similar set of reactions when they realise that the merged organisation is not the same as the organisation pre-merger. The fact that people need time and clarity in order to readjust may not be taken into account if the merger took place months before.

Our research found cases where employees first heard the news of the merger driving to work

A sobering lesson from the research is the importance of managing these people issues. Some senior executives expect to be able to spend the first transitional phase dealing with structural and financial matters, and then turn their attention to the vision and cultural issues at a later stage. One of the reasons that people issues tend to get ignored in the early phase is that executives are still trying to consolidate their own position in the new structure. It is usually only when their own role is clear that they are willing to focus on the people issues. They realise too late that the culture of the new organisation is already emerging at ground level.

This vital period is when people decide whether this is an organisation they want to work for and support, and whether it is an organisation that values its people. Bolted-on vision and value statements can appear an afterthought if the transition period has been riddled with organisational politics.

This is where the special skills of trainers can come into their own. Typically, trainers have good communication skills and are in touch with the 'mood' of employees. Trainers who are able to understand the business dynamics and the sensitivities involved in creating a new culture can provide a useful consultancy service to line managers who are charged with communications in the early days post-merger. Their insights into the issues that provoke employee cynicism can help avoid the many employee relations fiascos that can live on for years.

In one company, a well-meaning executive, wishing to reassure employees, announced that there would be no redundancies, only to have to eat his words a month later. It is advisable therefore that HR and trainers who have good communication skills are involved from an early stage in planning the communication strategy.

A positive change

Even with the best advice, managing mergers is a complex business which can be fraught with difficulty. As one seasoned HR director who has successfully handled the implementation of several mergers suggested, there will always be some people who consider the merger to be a failure, no matter what you do. This may be a predictable response to change and perhaps a key role for the training function is to equip people for ongoing change.

This will involve helping people to better understand how they can respond positively to change, how to create a personal development plan which includes an honest stock-take of their own skills and how to make things happen even in ambiguous times.

Once the shape of the organisation becomes clearer, people may need help in clarifying their roles, knowing where they fit into the organisation's purpose and how to be successful in the new set-up. This may require them to learn some new skills or adjust their working practices. In some of the most successful mergers, there is a genuine attempt by management to adopt best practice from both organisations, rather than trying to impose one set of practices on the other. This means that most people will experience some different ways of working, which the training team can help clarify through briefings and workshops.

Training to equip line managers

In the various organisations Roffey Park studied, it was often the line managers who found themselves in the front line of fire. They required a range of skills to cope with different demands such as integrating staff from the different organisations, collecting valuable feedback, as well as communicating difficult information up and down the line. This was in addition to maintaining 'business as usual'. These 'people skills' were often in short supply at a time when they were vitally important in creating trust among different employee groups.

One organisation described to us the damage done, during first encounters with employees from the acquired organisation, by managers who had been selected for functional skills rather than for 'people skills'. The line managers in question had not appreciated the impact of insensitive remarks when visiting employees in the acquired company. They unwittingly reinforced the notion that the company being acquired was less effective than their own and that few good ideas could be expected from 'losers'. Needless to say, trust was difficult to establish and uncontrolled staff turnover was the consequence.

Line managers often need what the researchers have called a 'primus stove toolkit' to facilitate the management process during the transitional phase of a merger. This might involve identifying temporary policies and short-term priorities. Time will be at a premium for training activity but short, relevant, toolkit sessions may help to build up confidence where responsibility, reporting lines and roles are as yet ill-defined.

Even with the best advice, managing mergers is a complex business which can be fraught with difficulty.

Training needs should be identified for managers as soon as possible. Communication skills and general interpersonal skills may be an urgent need. Roffey Park's research suggests that one of the most effective ways of bringing about a high performing organisation post-merger is to take the opportunity to raise standards of performance and to introduce improved working practices. However, managers must try to maintain as much stability as possible in the period following a merger, and opportunities for introducing stretch targets and for refocusing employees may be lost.

Trainers can help by developing programmes aimed at helping managers to increase their ability to manage perfor-

mance and to coach others. This need not necessitate formal training programmes. In some cases, all that may be required is a quick reinforcement of existing good practice. In other cases, thorough training may introduce some managers to people management skills for the first time.

managers must try to maintain as much stability as possible in the period following a merger

Since managers are in the front line for communication, it is essential that they have the ability to develop two-way communications. Practical help with team briefings and feedback processes may be helpful. Managers need to be able to communicate why the merger has taken place, what the organisation is trying to achieve and how each person's role fits in to achieving this. They also need to have a range of management styles appropriate to different circumstances and they may require help in developing style flexibility.

In creating a new organisational culture, many barriers need to be broken down and bridges built between different groups. In one organisation in Roffey Park's study, managers found that project work became a way of life in the emergent organisation and they needed to acquire new skills in project management with cross-boundary, cross-functional and sometimes cross-cultural teams.

In addition to focusing on skills and knowledge development, trainers can also provide a valuable service in identifying role models who are influential among their peers.

Managers who are adept at enabling teamwork, especially some of the more complex yet increasingly common forms such as cross-boundary teamwork, can support colleagues in developing an integrated culture.

The training department as talent spotters!

Increasingly, training departments are developing assessment services to complement their training provision. In the period following a merger there may well be a high level of demand for assessment as people are recruited or re-recruited for roles. Some of the skills required for the new organisation are likely to be already present among the junior management population.

The image of the tidal wave was used many times during the merger research and occasionally the odd surfer was spotted, riding the waves and thriving on the challenge.

While the training department is assessing the skills or competencies needed for these vital positions, it may find that some individuals thrive particularly well in times of change, and are able to motivate others and develop synergy. It is essential that trainers have an opportunity to assess the skills available among their existing staff as well as among newcomers.

Part of the assessment service is effective follow-through, with the provision of support to enable people to be effective in their new roles. In some cases this can take the form of a revised induction process for newcomers, or a specific role induction for existing staff. Other forms of support might include mentoring, at least for a short period, access to learning resources, and short cuts to acquiring the job-specific skills and knowledge people need to become effective as quickly as possible.

Trainers can develop practical tools for use by line managers who are called on to review performance and discuss development. In one organisation, on-line structured interview formats proved extremely useful in enabling line managers to carry out development discussions with employees, even with the minimum of training. The use of peer role models to hold the briefing sessions for the new process increased the take-up of the tools.

A new status for the training department?

Several of the case study organisations in the research had recruited new training managers destined to have a higher profile in the new organisation. Commitment to a higher training budget is a strong signal that even during the upheaval, staff development is still high on the agenda. Their first job was often to identify the new competencies for the merged organisation and to assess how they might best be developed.

In some cases the merger had had an initial objective of acquiring certain skills from the partner organisation. One, for example, had hoped to acquire a more entrepreneurial culture, less bound by regulations and protocol and more proactive in problem-solving at the interface with the customer. However, because it was assumed, by both sets of employees, that the acquirer must always know the right way to do things, much of this talent was initially lost only to re-emerge when a new management development programme encouraged the value of entrepreneurial skills.

Management development programmes were introduced in several organisations as an integration strategy and particularly in one case which involved international co-operation and restructuring. The aim of this programme was to work the vision and strategy of the new organisation through the management to the grass roots. It aimed to eliminate the 'us' and 'them' feel at management level and provided the opportunity for people to get to know each other on a personal level.

What has become clear from the research is that mergers are most successful when the 'people issues' are well handled. This is where training departments have a key role to play. Not only can they act as the organisation's temperature gauge and early warning system, they can also contribute to the identification and development of talent. The high level communication skills typical of many trainers are a vital asset, but they need to be accompanied by business awareness and the ability to cope well with change and to enable others to do so too. The potential contribution of trainers to the skilful and sensitive management of people in the months and years after a merger should not be underestimated. ■

Reference

1 Marion Devine and Wendy Hirsh with Valerie Garrow, Linda Holbeche and Chris Lake, *Mergers and Acquisitions: getting the people bit right*, Roffey Park Management Institute, 1998. (The report costs £50 and may be obtained from Roffey Park Management Institute, tel 01293 854052.)

The importance of reviewing documents

Flatter hierarchies have resulted in more and more employees being involved in the business writing process. Electronic communication has enabled written material to be produced faster and more efficiently. But why is it that more and more documents that are badly structured, unclear and inaccurate are going out of companies and what can be done to halt this worrying trend? **Gina Cuciniello** explains.

Gina Cuciniello is a Training Consultant with Simon Mort Reports Ltd, specialists in written communications training. As well as running courses throughout Europe and South East Asia, Gina edits the work of a leading financial institution. She can be contacted on 01865 311611 or fax 01865 310833.

The recent surge in the use of electronic communication has led to a rise in the amount of written material in the workplace. The time once taken to write a report has now been greatly reduced and writers are increasingly under pressure to produce great quantities of written work to tight deadlines. What is more, the flatter hierarchical structures of organisations today lead to a greater number of employees having to write reports and proposals, often with no formal training. As a result, instead of the writing standards of professionals improving, it seems they may well be slipping.

Before the onset of electronic communication, with the resulting faster turnover of written material, more time was available for drafting and re-drafting of documents. Business writing was seen by many to be a well-nurtured skill, possessed by a talented few.

Of course, today, no one should feel they have to be a brilliant writer to produce effective business documents. In today's fast-moving business environments it is ideas that people are interested in and not brilliantly crafted sentences. You should write to inform and not write to impress.

However, carelessness can have serious repercussions for the company. The writer's credibility is thrown into doubt. How can they be seen as professional and focused if their writing is full of inconsistencies and grammatical errors? And how can their company be seen as one of the best if it employs people capable of such sloppy workmanship?

So what can be done to assist today's professionals to continuously develop their business writing skills in the company? One time-saving and effective solution to this is to encourage employees to take a more active role in reviewing and editing documents.

Three steps to reviewing

Initially a reviewer should follow the following three steps.

We all learn by doing, making mistakes and then getting it right. Providing guidance to junior members of staff on their written material will provide both them and the organisation with an invaluable service.

Read through the document to check it makes sense

Structured thoughts occur in the brain faster than fingers can type and as a consequence words and phrases can frequently be omitted. Check that points are made clearly with an adequate explanation. There is nothing worse than an idea that is merely introduced and not followed through to a logical conclusion.

Examine the structure of the document

Check that the sections are placed appropriately. Is there a section that would be better placed in a more prominent position?

The headings should be specific enough to provide a clear indication as to what follows. A reader should be able to glance at the headings used and get a good idea of the argument the writer has put forward.

Check for inconsistent details

Inconsistencies in the following areas are particularly irritating to readers:

- paragraph numbering
- disjointed system of headings
- repetition of words and phrases
- use of initial capital letters for job titles, report titles, and so on
- sequencing of items
- use of spelling, for example, American or British spelling
- discipline of bullet-points, italics, bold, and so on.

Many contributors, many errors?

Ideally, documents put together by several people should appear seamless. In reality this is nearly impossible to achieve, due to the different styles of writing among the authors. Obvious signs of a varied authorship, however, could distract the reader with small irrelevancies.

Whether the work is your own, that of a junior member of staff or the work of many contributors the focus and the attention to detail should be the same.

Reviewing the work of junior staff

We all learn by doing, making mistakes and then getting it right. Providing guidance to junior members of staff on their written material will provide both them and the organisation with an invaluable service. They will benefit from precise and relevant advice in the workplace and the organisation will be spared the inconvenience of sending key staff away for off-the-job training.

An abundance of comments and changes made to the work of junior staff can have a detrimental effect on their morale. It is also time-consuming to all concerned. Any changes should therefore be limited to things that are important. So what changes, if any, should a reviewer make to the work of junior staff?

As writing style varies from one writer to another, reviewers should avoid changing aspects of style to make the document more in line with their own. A great deal of damage can be done by an over-concentration on small changes, too petty to mention in detail, that flatten a writer's style and can ruin the rhythm of a sentence, the flow of the argument or the liveliness of the tone.

Style is a result of background, age and education. There is no good or bad style of writing — only one that is appropriate to the reader and the situation.

What should be changed?

Of course, certain things have to be corrected. For example, the technical details must be accurate. The meaning must be clear and free from ambiguity. Is the sentence structure easy to understand and the sentence length not too long?

Have the words been chosen carefully? Not only sentence structure must be checked but also the choice of words. Are they precise enough to convey the exact meaning that the writer intended? If the meaning is unclear, a reader may have to read a report again. Not many people enjoy reading reports and they certainly don't want to read them twice.

To be wholly effective, comments made should be specific, positive and supported by an explanation, preferably face to face.

Is the writer too chummy and informal? A reader will be offended by an inappropriate intimacy in a letter. Whereas an over formal tone can strike a reader as stilted and even intimidating. You only have to look at the disheartening effect many older style legal documents have on some readers.

Things that *must* be changed when reviewing junior staff's work

- technical inaccuracy
- ambiguity
- inappropriate tone
- excessive length

To be wholly effective, comments made should be specific, positive and supported by an explanation, preferably face to face. Feedback conducted face to face will make the writer feel more comfortable, less resentful and also provide an opportunity for the employee to ask questions and seek clarification. Employees must be made to feel encouraged to develop professionally and not feel that they are being reprimanded.

Internal documents?

Of course, everyone agrees that the standard of written work that goes outside a company must be high. But it is often argued that a low standard in documents circulated within a company, such as in memos and e-mails, can be tolerated due to the constraints of time.

It should be remembered that the speed with which electronic mail moves enables documents to be whisked off and arrive with a mere touch of a button. A badly written document can be copied and turn up in unexpected places within seconds of posting.

Writing for a colleague known for their tolerance of errors is no excuse for carelessness. Those copies may end up on the desk of the Chief Executive, who is probably less likely to be so easy-going.

Even if errors and a lack of attention to detail are more acceptable to an internal reader, they will certainly not be so for readers of important external documents such as proposals.

Future perfect?

With the threat of recession looming, companies cannot afford to take a laid-back attitude towards the standard of written products in a company. Electronic communication, in all its permutations, is expected to spread throughout every organisation on a global basis. There will be even more written material in circulation and produced by an increasing number of, possibly, inexperienced employees. Today, more than ever, staff need to be encouraged and trained to review documents well and pass on their knowledge to other staff.

Only by doing this will personal professional standards be kept high and in line with that of the organisation. ■

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Only by doing this will personal professional standards be kept high and in line with that of the organisation. ■

Motivation: the 'new tough' approach

According to **Jim Curry**, it is only those companies employing self-motivated employees that will survive into the next millennium. Here he expands on his point of view.

Many companies profess to take an interest in how employees can be more highly motivated, but the hidden agenda usually means how can they be more motivated to produce more products, improve customer service or benefit the company?

The debate usually centres on which external factors — money, working conditions, holidays, promotion prospects and so on, are the most effective. While we believe we can control these factors, this idea is largely an illusion since market conditions, profitability and many other constraints often make these decisions for us. So what are we left with? The motivation that is within us is far more powerful than any external factor and more accessible to influence.

Fear: the best motivator?

What can be used to influence self-motivation? Fear seems to be effective and is easy to use, especially on a workforce whose mobility or opportunities are restricted, but companies using fear to motivate tend to lose good quality staff to the opposition. If you are bigger, stronger or more powerful than the individual you are trying to motivate, the use of fear is a great temptation and many great leaders in bygone years such as Hannibal have used fear very effectively to achieve the impossible. However, this was usually in the context of war, when individuals were fighting for their lives. Even in today's highly competitive environment, most companies would still not consider themselves to be in this position. Complacency was a terminal illness, which most of the ancient civilisations suffered from. It is still commonplace today.

If in the past intimidation was 'old tough', personal responsibility is today's 'new tough'. For companies, just like individuals, modern and ancient, survival is a very real issue. We have to look at the context within which we are operating, and ask: 'Is motivation by fear going to be effective in today's workplace?'

To enable employees to align their goals with those of the organisations, we must understand a little bit more about the nature of motivation itself. In his book, Frankel[1] notes that in the concentration camp where he was held during the second world war, people who lost their meaning for life quickly lost the motivation to carry on living and they simply died, usually within a few days. Self-motivation is as necessary and as natural as breathing — without either the results are the same.

The motivation that is within us is far more powerful than any external factor and more accessible to influence

Human beings are genetically programmed to learn and to achieve. As young children we are biologically engineered to explore the world around us, to gather information of what is and what is not safe in order to survive. If this were not the case, the human race would have long since died out. Our basic instinct for survival is the greatest motivator for success; self-evident in young children, it is still present just as strongly when we mature. As adults, with more highly developed survival skills, we have the opportunity to channel our energies into other areas. Given half a chance everyone

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is highly motivated to make a difference, to give meaning to their own lives. So why don't they?

Asking the right question

I believe it is because the majority of people become helpless in one form or another. For me to make a difference I must believe that I have some control over my environment. I must assume responsibility for my own achievements. To do that I cannot accept that 'he made me', 'she made me', or the 'situation made me' behave in a particular way. If I believe that I have no control over my own behaviour then I am a victim. Victims cannot motivate themselves, they have to be 'foot operated'.

To enable employees to align their goals with those of the organisations, we must understand a little bit more about the nature of motivation

If everyone is naturally highly motivated, and becoming a victim suppresses it, why do so many people assume a victimised status? The eminent psychologist Martin Seligman shows in his book *Learned Optimism* how people can be taught to be helpless within bounded situations. When they find that, in this situation, nothing they do makes a difference, they give up. Even when conditions change for the better they are still locked into helplessness. So who assists us to become helpless?

Causing the damage

Most training and education damages the people it was designed to help. In our early years, from parents, teachers and other 'authority' figures we hear: "Do as you are told." Rather than follow our own interests and instincts we are encouraged to conform to the 'norm', for no other reason than, in this way, it is perceived that we can be more easily managed. Someone has taken away from us the responsibility for our own learning and achieving. We frequently experience that challenging our parents or authority hurts. It is a lesson with which we are presented time and time again during our formative years. We may have come some way from the Victorian idea of 'children should be seen and not heard', but we still have a long way to go. University education and our first experience of employment reinforces the same message — we are here to think for you! School league tables push in the direction of making authority accountable for the individual's performance. It is no wonder that so few university graduates become self-made millionaires.

In the workplace managers are made responsible for output and this encourages them to problem solve for others. In doing so, they reaffirm the helplessness of the person with the problem. The Teachers, managers, directors and often parents are concentrating on how they will be judged. Students, employees and children are constantly encouraged to work towards someone else's agenda. "It is for your own good", "I am trying to help you", "Trust me, do it this way", "I know what I am doing", "Who pays the wages anyway?". There is a tendency to focus on outcomes rather than a process. Once we have a successful process in place then the right outcomes are a natural side effect.

The fact that we are even asking, 'What are the best motivators?' indicates that we are looking in the wrong direction. High self-motivation is a side effect of an effective process. It is of little use to set up an environment by which coaching and challenging is encouraged if the people within that environment are all victims. There needs to be a process of de-victimisation, which enables the full potential of the people to be fulfilled. We know that once a person is de-victimised in a given situation then it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to be re-victimised in the same situation.

Repairing the damage

In one such de-victimising process, people are introduced to a new reality and encouraged to explore its limits. Usually set up as a 'pilot project', the manager, now retrained as a coach, refuses to give any answers. Instead he asks: "What would we have to do to achieve an improvement here?" Patronising comments such as "Well done" are discouraged and factual feedback, such as for example, "Your time is half a second off gold; you will need to work harder if you are determined to succeed" are encouraged. The initial projects are usually very small, guaranteeing success. As the projects, chosen by the participants, increase in size and complexity, then the greater the success and the higher the self-esteem. As self-esteem increases, the more likely the participants are to take the next step, and feel motivated to try harder, work faster and achieve more. The individuals, now encouraged to rekindle self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth and personal responsibility, are de-victimised and their own natural self-motivation blossoms.

A feeling that it is worthwhile

Understandably then, it is the things that we are passionate about that are most likely to motivate us. Some of the most highly motivated people are those striving for a goal that encompasses their own 'meaning for life'. Animal rights people, those working to 'save' the environment, missionaries, political groups, 'freedom' fighters and so on are often so highly motivated, so passionate about their beliefs, that they will set themselves goals that will put at risk their freedom, their happiness and sometimes their lives. This group is unlikely to show much interest in shorter working hours, more pay and longer holidays.

Most training and education damages the people it was designed to help.

A need to do it for yourself, to challenge the limits that society seeks to set on your achievement, helps you to discover your own capabilities. Challenging yourself doesn't damage your self-esteem, but it may help you to discover that you need help and support to achieve your goal. Most athletes recognise that a coach can help them to achieve performance improvement. Yet the coach never receives the gold medal. She/he is the unsung hero whose name is often not known or recognised by a public that

Continued on page 24

Perception is paramount

Peter Bolt believes that perception is becoming as important as results in today's fast moving world. The bottom line is still crucial, but other results need to be perceived to be achieved — as well as be achieved. He argues that the need to maintain a balance between private life and work is crucial and offers some tips on how to achieve this.

Perception is becoming as important as results in today's fast-moving world. The bottom-line is of course crucial, but other results need to be perceived to be achieved, as well as being achieved.

Every day in the newspapers, we can see how important perception is. Words spoken in the corridors of power, influence events. How people are perceived has a huge influence on climbing up the ladder and gaining success.

Managers need to consider how they are perceived, and work out how they would like to be perceived. A common mistake for sales directors, for example, is to make the customer the only priority. They should also treat head office as the customer, because by virtue of paying salaries, head office is a sort of customer. If the sales director's work is not perceived well by those in charge, his/her job is at risk.

Perceptions vary dramatically, and can be illustrated by the mixed reactions to public figures. One man's fool is another man's leader. Wide inconsistencies between a man's self perception and others can often be humorous, and reflected in nicknames used in the office, such as, for example, 'smiling death' for an unpopular hatchet man.

Perceptions quite simply have to be worked at. Firstly you have to decide how you would like to be described. Secondly, to alter perceptions you need to know what they are, and it is worth getting a few comments from people you trust. When the same adjectives come up continually you need to take note. Thirdly you need to work at changing them for the better. When perceptions are inconsistent, it is clearly worth correcting them.

For example, take a man, who senior managers perceived as 'too nice', even when his staff described him as 'steely'. He is able to correct this inconsistency once he knows it. Sometimes a little acting can bolster the part you are happy to play in your company.

Appraisals should include perceptions. Soon this important point will be recognised in formal practices, such as annual appraisals. Managers should not to be afraid of hurting people's feelings by telling them the truth. In the long run it is giving them a tool for success.

One such tool is confidence. This is where the importance of a fulfilling private life comes in; it makes you happy, and gives you confidence and 'bottle' — the courage to take strong decisions. A fulfilling private life also gives people the courage to both recognise and tell the truth. People often try and substitute long hours for lack of 'bottle'. It doesn't work. It just makes them slaves to work. You have to have the confidence to be judged by your effectiveness, not the hours you put in.

The advantages of living a full life should be obvious. And people who have self confidence that is fully deserved find they can achieve things they never dreamt they could. It is important that both public and private life are in harmony. Indeed private pressures risk spilling over into work.

If we work to live, rather than live to work, a great home life can be the harvest. Discipline is needed in managing family life, as well as work, in planning a driving holiday in France, just as much as planning a business meeting.

Peter Bolt gives in-company Masterclass in Management lectures and one-to-one mentoring at board and senior management level. He can be contacted on 0181 747 0109.

Family activities should go in the diary. This means not just dinners and visits but reading a book at bedtime, playing mini-cricket or helping with homework. A family is like a plant and needs continual care. We only have one life, and a happy life is the result of achieving a balance between home and work. A rounded person has lasting power.

Achieving balance has its dos and don'ts. Don't stay late at the office to look good; don't work at home every weekend; don't say you're too tired at home. Do make partner time; notice your partner's new haircut or tie; do make children time; do make birthdays and anniversaries special; have 'do nothing' weekends; nurture your family and yourself; protect your personal time; book your holidays, two ahead, and do have fun, at home and at work.

Most people under-perform. People are generally operating at 20–30 per cent below their potential, in terms of effectiveness. With the right guidance, and time to think about what they want, managers can find a better route forward. The aim should be to get that down to zero.

This does not mean working harder, but setting priorities. A choice must be made as to which projects need to be done professionally and which are unimportant. One question to ask is, 'Does it impact on the bottom line?'. Most people are not ruthless enough in what they do not do.

Every morning when you sit down at your desk, you should write down the six most important things you have to do. When planning projects, a five-stage approach works, starting with a brainstorming session about where you are trying to get to. The second point is to plan how you are going to achieve this. Only at the third stage do you decide who will implement what. In business there is not nearly enough of stages four and five: monitoring your progress and looking back at what has been achieved. Having selected priorities, preparation is the key. Like the golfer who gets the ball out of the bunker, it isn't just luck it's practice. Drafts of reports and rehearsals for speeches or even negotiations should go down in the diary. There are probably six to ten really important projects a year for most people. So it's possible to be ready for them in advance.

Your career development should be among your priorities. No one else is going to plan it as well as you can yourself. There are several scenarios to consider: what you are doing currently, the next move, and the future. You need to visualise how you can protect yourself from a rainy day, and what is your ideal blue sky.

Preparation also involves the good use of time. Do what you have to do at the right time. Keep a 'bring forward' file. A simple concertina file can contain information on the days it is needed for action. If you keep to the jobs you have given yourself on your daily calendar, it makes you feel good. You have tackled what you should have done that day, and this is fulfilling in itself. You are on the way to fulfilling your potential. More importantly, everyone is different. That is why it is essential to get the right advice to meet your particular needs. ■

Continued from page 22

hero-worships the Olympic champion. Ask any top athlete who the best coaches are and she/he will be able to name them all. A far cry from the 'hero' manager.

The future

Imagine a company in which the workers sacked the manager because she/he was incapable of improving their personal performance? Or how about a school where the students, not the parents or the Government, sacked the teacher because they couldn't create a sustained sense of wonder? This would require a workforce who were determined that the company didn't just survive, but excelled; a workforce that was de-victimised and took personal responsibility for their own achievements — rather than the company, the manager, or 'team spirit'. Students who achieved not for the honour of the school, nor to meet their parents' expectations, but because they took personal responsibility for their own development and set their own goals is another example.

Leading people out of their victim status, to release their need to achieve, means that they are now ready to make a difference. People must feel that the enterprise is worthwhile if they are going to make a commitment. It is the head teachers and leaders of organisations whose responsibility it is to create the sense of purpose, of wonder and of urgency, and to give others the energy and belief that the goals are achievable. What use to any organisation is a leader that no one will follow? And for people to follow, they must be doing it for themselves, for once they have committed to achievement of a goal — it will affect everything they do. Sustained motivation does not come from others, it comes from within. Selfishness is not an evil but a necessary part of self-esteem without which we are not motivated.

De-victimised individuals who have taken on personal responsibility for their own development and performance, are determined to succeed, and know precisely what part they are to play in the organisation's success, are ready for an environment that has a leader who inspires confidence and a coach who honours and respects. This is the environment of 'new tough' where the responsibility for high self-motivation, high self-esteem and high personal achievement belongs to the individual.

In a world where everything seems to change almost on an hourly basis, companies who rely solely on directors and managers for the company's success are doomed to follow the way of Taylorism and the dinosaurs. ■

In the workplace managers are made responsible for output and this encourages them to problem solve for others.

Reference

1 Victor E Frankel, *Man's search for meaning*, Simon & Schuster, 1984.
2 Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, Simon & Schuster 1991.

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NETcheck

a personal view of the Internet by Clare Forrest

In this month's review of the Net, Clare Forrest reports on a site offering advice to managers seeking guidance on ethical decision-making; another discovery is a link that provides ideas, advice and sources for job seekers. And finally Clare recommends a site worth a visit by all those who would like to know how to update their presentation skills workshops, or simply to improve their own techniques.

At the time of writing, I have been digesting the very unwelcome news that a valued client has been forced to make a substantial number of redundancies. It seems that the recession really is here. This type of news is always devastating to hear, but particularly so when, as I do, you know many of the people involved, and have worked with them for many years. So, with a somewhat heavy heart, here are my reviews for this month.

The first is — perhaps appropriately, but purely coincidentally — at http://www.mapnp.org/library/ethics/ethxgde.htm#anchor96255. This lengthy URL will take you to the *Complete Guide to Ethics Management: An Ethics Toolkit for Managers* written by Carter McNamara, PhD. Carter has put together a free guidebook of about twenty pages, providing straightforward advice for leaders and managers to manage ethics in their workplaces. I particularly liked Carter's note for readers, reproduced here:

'The free nature of this document does not in any way indicate that its contents are of low value — high fees and impressive presentation do not necessarily imply high value.'

Hear, hear.

Apparently Carter has, as a manager, struggled through several major ethical dilemmas, one of which was quite public, so he knows and understands the experience. Since then he has developed several codes of ethics and conduct.

The ethical dilemmas described in the article are very relevant to employers today and cover the sort of everyday decisions we often have to take; for example: 'A customer (or client) asked for a product (or service) from us today. After telling him our price, he said he couldn't afford it. I know he could get it cheaper from a competitor. Should I tell him about the competitor — or let him go without getting it.' Hmmm … what would you do?

The guidebook doesn't provide the answers but does provide a useful framework for problem-solving as well as some tools for reaching an ethical decision. In addition, there are links to sample ethical codes so that you can see how other organisations are addressing the issues, and a comprehensive resource list.

Altogether a very worthwhile resource, which any one who is currently having to consider the question of ethics will find invaluable.

Continuing the theme of change, one of the best signposted sites I've come across recently is at http://www.careersolutions.co.uk. This is a gem and it's UK based, which makes a pleasant change. Career Solutions has managed to create a site that combines good marketing with great information. Unlike so many company websites this is far, far more than an on-line brochure. It provides the job seeker with lots of ideas, advice and sources, while gently encouraging product purchase. Indeed, so effective is its approach that I nearly took up the offer to have my CV professionally produced … until I remembered that that's what I do, too!

The site has a super page of links, which really do take the job seeker forward and/or lighten the job hunt burden. I was particularly taken with The Shrink Tank … you'll see why if you visit! Even if you're not looking to change your career direction you probably know someone who is — do them a favour and introduce them to this site.

http://www.presentations.com/index.html is a useful site for when you want information to update your presentation skills workshops or to improve your own techniques. Developed and maintained by Lakeside Communications, this site provides a monthly magazine of tips, techniques, case studies and research for those interested in presentation skills. Not a particularly attractive site to look at — a black background with a colour I can only describe as dried blood for the side bar — the magazine is exceptionally easy to read. Clearly, aestheticism in colour is less important than legibility. And rightly so. Presumably this is lesson one in presentation excellence.

In the issue I looked at for November among the topics covered were the following.

- Rear-screen whiteboards: how well do these high-powered presentation tools handle?
- PowerPoint 2000 is coming. (As an aside, very bad news this, as in my experience most people haven't got to grips with the basics of PowerPoint, can't use an LCD effectively — when did you last check the lamp life? — and seem to think that whizz-bang animations and laser sound effects guarantee success. Since Microsoft love adding on new features, the prospects are very grim indeed for our poor audiences.)
- Four techniques to guarantee you're a terrible presenter.

This latter article from Jim Endicott was particularly entertaining. Step two, according to Jim, is 'Try to make your presentation look like everyone else's' — should be compulsory reading for all of us.

http://www.presentingsolutions.com/effectivepresentations.html tackles the same topics in a quieter, more traditional, way. The company Presenting Solutions, sells presentation equipment and this part of its site provides some quick tips. As it says "We have tried to assemble many tips on presentations, in the hopes that some will trigger old knowledge, others may be new to you. When you leave here, we like to think that your next presentation will go perhaps a little smoother or a bit better, by virtue of our reminding you about some things that you already 'knew'." Nothing of great note here, but useful for a quick brush up — or, indeed, as material for the novice who is about to be let loose on an unsuspecting audience.

WHAT'S NEW

Here's a quick round-up of recently released training resources. In addition to details of video- and text-based training packs, we have also listed audio, CBT, CD-ROM, intranet and Internet programmes, along with open courses.

Business information systems

Next month, Strathclyde Graduate Business School will launch a new *MSc degree in Business Information Systems Management*. The course, which is for managers, information specialists and those hoping to specialise in information systems, aims to give participants a greater understanding of business processes and how IS can be used to enhance them. It will also focus on the development and management of IS strategies, and will run on a 'mixed mode' basis — a combination of full-time seminars and tutor-supported open learning. For further information contact the Graduate Admissions Office on 0800 661966.

Business management

Fundamental Skills for Business Management is a new series of workshop programmes from Stratagem (01722 416339), comprising *Selling Skills, Marketing, Finance and Management*. The four programmes include tutor guidelines, a workbook for participants, a set of OHP slides, a pre-workshop checklist to help the tutor prepare, and optional pre-workshop activity proforma, participant place cards, workshop evaluation forms and certificates of attendance.

Competitiveness for managers

Luton Business School will launch an *MSc in Competitiveness* in April. Aimed at middle managers, the three-year course will equip them with the practical skills needed for key business functions, such as finance, marketing, managing people and innovation. It has been designed to give a clear understanding of the key processes and concepts related to competitiveness and help managers to develop analytical skills. Other topics include creativity and innovation, marketing, managing in the competitive environment and strategic entrepreneurship. Further information is available from the National Centre for Competitiveness on 01582 723129.

Desktop presenter

The Elmo DT-75 desktop presenter from Vivitar (01793 544823) is PAL compatible and has S-Video output. It produces high resolution line images, has a maximum shooting area of 396 x 297 mm, a built-in lighting unit for use in darkened rooms and automatic compensation for back lighting. White balance and gain control are also automatic. Compact even when fully set up, it weighs only 0.8 kg (1.8 lbs).

Electronics training

New electronics training, developed by employers and Training and Enterprise Councils in South Wales, is to be used as a blueprint for developing technician skills throughout Britain. Endorsed by the Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA), the *Technician Development Packages* are designed to help electronics employers to plan the training of a wide range of technicians including process, assembly and test, auto-insert and quality control technicians. The skills packages also include a recognised system of NVQ and related qualifications. Further information is available from Phil Romain at EMTA on 01923 238441.

Free guides for business people

Written by experienced business experts with the owner manager in mind, four guides in *The You and Your Business series* — entitled *People, Marketing, Money, and Health & Safety* — are now available from the Management Charter Initiative (MCI).

The booklets, which are also suitable for those working as part of a larger enterprise, have all received the 'Crystal mark' award from the Plain English Campaign. All four guides take the reader through a step-by-step approach to achieving better performance, based on the principles of good business management practice developed by the MCI. To order your free set (maximum ten copies) fax MCI on 0171 872 9099.

Integrated training

Sybase Education (01628 597100) has launched *Next Generation Learning*, a learner-led approach to training that integrates web-based course content — delivered through the Internet or company intranets — with classroom training. NLG Studio, a tool that stores material centrally but allows replication anywhere, underpins the approach. Content may be updated at one point, and changes distributed and deployed instantly to multiple locations, according to need. The tool can equip anyone who can use Microsoft Word or Windows Explorer with the facility to build interactive web-based training.

IT skills

Key Training's (01256 8641111) new Training Needs Analysis tool, *TNA2000*, simulates common software packages, enabling organisations to identify the proficiency of their staff, and the level and type of training they require. The tool identifies the training people require by assessing their existing knowledge and experience. The tool is compatible to working on a standalone PC, a network and over a LAN or WAN, and will soon be available over the Internet.

An interactive demo of the tool (available on the company's website at www.keytraining.co.uk) features Windows 95 and uses screens from the operating software.

Investors in People

Internal Audit Programme for Investors in People, from Action Learning Ltd (01524 811890), is a suite of internal audit frameworks created to enable organisations to establish the extent to which they meet the Standard. Designed to lead organisations through the indicators in a logical and structured way, the programme is suitable for organisations seeking recognition or re-recognition under either the 3-year or 12 to 15-month review routes. The audit trails are contained in a workbook and pose a series of questions based around the management processes involved.

Health and safety

Osteopaths for Industry (OFI) (0181 398 7533) currently offers in-house and external courses in manual handling techniques and risk assessment, ranging from half-day seminars, to certified train the trainer courses. OFI also caters for all display screen equipment needs, such as workstation assessment and key personnel or user training. Two new trainer support

packages, aimed at manual and client handling instructors have recently been launched. These come complete with video material produced in conjunction with the BBC, overhead transparencies and a text-based manual.

Leadership and team management

A three-day course from Fielden-Cegos (0161 445 2426), *Leadership and team management*, shows delegates how to motivate a winning team by revealing the dynamics of winning teams in action and examining the influences that shape them. The course has been designed to equip delegates with the skills required to identify practical ways in which they can successfully promote a focused and productive team culture.

Multimedia authoring system

Training and communication consultancy Information Transfer has launched *Seminar3*, a new version of its existing computer based training system. Aimed at people whose expertise lies in training and communication rather than computer technology, the system features a range of 'intelligent templates' that allow the user to create information and interactive question screens, and put them together as a structured programme. All of the interactive responses and scoring mechanisms work automatically. For more information and a free demo CD call 01223 312227.

Noise measurement

CEL Instruments (01462 422411) provides courses on the Noise at Work Regulations, Practical Industrial Noise Control and Environmental Noise monitoring. Consisting of a series of one-day sessions, the courses may be taken individually, or linked to suit the delegate's individual requirements. The next courses will run during this month and September.

Presentation equipment

Presentation World Direct is a one-stop shop for any presentation requirement. Its new catalogue covers an extensive range of presentation equipment and supplies from the major market leaders including OHPs, multimedia LCD projectors, LCD monitors, electronic copyboards, standard and large-screen TVs, monitors, video players, slide projectors and audio equipment. The company also offers a wide range of accessories such as screens, trolleys, tripods, lamps, stationery and consumables for Kodak inkjet printers, marker pens, and video and audio tapes. For a free copy of the catalogue call 0870 606 2045.

Flipcharts, OHPs, conference furniture and a host of other presentation products from Nobo and Sasco are now featured in *Acco's 1999 Presentation Products Catalogue*. To obtain your free copy phone 0800 252359.

Project management

Ashridge (01442 843491) has launched its five-day *Project Management in Action* programme for project team leaders and managers responsible for sponsoring projects. Solutions driven, the programme uses Eli Goldratt's 'Critical Cahin' theory, introducing planning tools that recognise the world as it really is, and focusing on the human elements of project management. It aims to deliver practical solutions — from creating a commitment to deadlines from a project team, to anticipating and resolving resource conflicts. Participants develop a personal portfolio of techniques to enable effective teambuilding across organisational and functional boundaries through project simulations, presentations and focus workshops. The next programmes run from 16–21 May and 10–15 October.

Quest for balance

Designed to meet a current and significant management development need, *Quest for Balance*, from Roffey Park is a two-day open programme aimed at executives who want a more balanced lifestyle. For further information call Susan Foran on 01293 854059.

Self-assessment for New Deal clients

A self-assessment CD-ROM for New Deal clients, created by knowledge=power, in conjunction with Bradford TEC, features the company's Virtual Learning Centre in using psychometric testing to assess New Dealers' basic job interests and aptitudes. The Virtual Learning Centre provides a virtual reality classroom, in which users can play interactive games to assess skills, undertake exams and do research. Information about the users' progress can be collated centrally, providing valuable management information. For further information call 0171 631 3313.

Software converts existing materials to on-line training

Link2Learning software provides an electronic solution to delivering existing training materials direct to the desks of employees or to any PC with an on-line connection. Content can be drawn from a variety of sources, including written documents, voice commentary and animation, material from CD-ROMs, videos, the web and other software applications to form a training programme. Trainer and learner communicate via e-mail, application sharing and document conferencing to create a virtual classroom for the delivery of course modules and despatch of assignments. Training programmes can be drawn up and study progress monitored, while controlled access to the Internet allows easy desktop research. The software is ideal for use on an intranet. *Link2Learning* has already been successfully used by the educational sector for two years to deliver training courses including NVQs. Further information is available from IMS Group on 0113 2428 428.

Talking training website

The BT Talking Training website now includes information about Millennium training courses, which are funded by FOCUS Central London Training and Enterprise Council, as part of the Government's 'Bug Buster' programme. The one- to five-day courses can be studied at training centres across London, by distance learning or over the Internet. Most private sector companies with fewer than 250 employees are entitled to the free funding.

Also included on the website is the new BBC for Business series of 'fly-on-the-wall' training videos for small businesses. The *Make or Break* series documents the first year in the life of ten new businesses and provides potential new business owners with the opportunity to see first hand the pitfalls and successes people encounter when setting up a business.

The BT Talking Training lines are open from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm on Monday to Friday. The service can be accessed on 0870 606 0088 or at www.talkingtraining.bt.com

Telemarketing

Guide to Effective Telemarketing from Spearhead Direct (01438 821155) contains a series of articles to bring readers up to date on the latest thinking and innovation in telephone marketing practice. There are sections designed to answer most of the questions that you have about setting up and running a telephone marketing operation. Tips, advice and guidelines are given on a range of topics including: systems for monitoring performance; training telemarketing staff; telesales and direct mail, and checking your product's suitability for telemarketing.

Toolkit for organisational change

Managing change effectively has probably become the most important task for today's manager. It is a complex and demanding task, which cannot easily be achieved without a proper strategy and clear structure for managing all aspects of change. *Toolkit for Organisational Change* from Fenman (01353 665533) attempts to help managers develop that strategy and structure. The pack includes a five-step approach to managing change, and contains a range of self-assessment questions and issues to consider, which aims to help users gain a clear picture of where they are now, and the direction they need to be taking in the future.

Touch typing

Supplied on CD as well as diskettes, *Accu-Type 4 for Windows* now includes multiple language sets (English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese and Polish) and audio-typing exercises. The course provides training in touch-typing technique for both beginners and those needing to refresh their skills. It has built-in intelligence that adjusts the content of the course according to the individual's learning rate. The whole course usually takes between 12 and 20 hours and covers the entire keyboard, including special characters and numerics. For further information contact Ben Friman on 01933 419009.

Tourism careers advice

A new Internet site — *Career Compass* — www.careercompass.co.uk for tourism careers advice has made its debut. Built by a partnership comprising The Travel and Tourism Programme, the English Tourist Board (ETB) and Travel Tourism Jobs, *Career Compass* enables job seekers to access more than 100 job descriptions as well as detailed information about the level of experience and qualifications required and sources for more information. In addition, there are direct hyperlinks to the websites of the three main National Training Organisations (NTOs) in tourism — the Hospitality Training Foundation (HtF), SPRITO covering sport and recreation as well as attractions and the caravan industry, and TTENTO, responsible for travel, tourism services and events. A further hyperlink is provided to and from the British Tourist Authority's VisitBritain site as well as sites managed by national and regional tourist boards in the UK.

Training on the Internet

Intuition Publishing, source of web-based computer-based training and reference products for banks and financial institutions, is moving its entire library of more than 500 training titles to the Internet. The first products to be launched on the web include training suites on Securities Regulation, EMU, Money Laundering, Emerging Markets, Letters of Credit and Mutual Funds. More information is available on the company's website: http: www.intuitionpublishing.com

Training session packages

Daedal Training (01689 873637) is releasing a new series of short training session packages, based around the company's existing course-running material. The packs are provided with electronic masters for participants' material, in MS-Word 97, so that trainers can amend the material to suit their own organisation's needs. Overhead transparencies are provided in the form of PowerPoint 97 presentation slides, which can also be printed out in black and white or in colour. The first packs to be released are *Giving and Receiving Feedback*, *Influencing & Negotiating Skills*, and *Customer Relations on the Telephone*.

Welcoming calls

How businesses deal with enquiries and answer questions on the telephone can make the difference between success and failure. Few people in the growing tourism industry received adequate training, and often sales are lost and the business suffers. A new, practical qualification from The English Tourist Board (0181 848 9000) is now tackling this problem. Called *Welcome Line*, the programme aims to assist all types of tourism, transport and hospitality organisations. The one-day programme covers a wide range of knowledge and skills, which support Units and elements in the NVQ Levels 2 and 3 Customer Service. It is being run throughout England with the involvement of the training departments of most Regional Tourist Boards. The training is based on interactive learning methods and use of specially created training equipment is offered either in-house, for businesses with larger workforces, or on open-course events at pre-set dates and venues.

Women's development

The Aziz Corporation (0171 329 0225) has launched a *Through the Glass Ceiling workshop*, which has been designed to maximise the personal and professional effectiveness of executive women and enable them to conquer the barriers to success in organisations. The workshop will cover: the factors that will enable women's full contribution to business in the 21st century; personal management and communications styles, and how gender affects these; the principles of effective communication; building self-esteem, credibility and charisma; dealing with difficult people; developing the perfect presentation; negotiating to win; and striking a work-life balance.

Writing skills

Write for Results is the first title in the Get-Ahead Toolkit series, which has been designed to help office professionals improve their skills and increase their value in the workplace. This self-training pack includes an interactive CD-ROM, accompanied by an original book that extends the multimedia content. The CD-ROM is filled with advice, illustrations, bulleted checklists, self-quizzes and pop-up windows. There are also reference sections and search tools. Further information is available from McGraw-Hill on 01628 502500.

Brian Tucker reviews

Brian Tucker is Company Secretary and Co-ordinator for The Forum for Technology in Training, and a technology-based training consultant. He may be contacted on 0151 342 8606.

WINDOWS 98
CD-ROM — Spoken Word
Zain Media

This, as the name implies, is a spoken word training course, which has the advantage that it could be played from a standard CD player, if the computer does not have a CD-ROM drive. This, though, is not likely as a PC running Windows 98 is probably a Multimedia PC.

There are pros and cons for this style of training. I have always felt that training courses that simulate a computer system are all very well, but it does not allow you to proceed unless you press the right key or carry out the correct action. You therefore do not feel that you are using the system you are trying to learn. This course talks you through using the live system. So you are practising with the system you are learning about.

The disadvantage is that you are using two separate media and the training has to be set at a slow pace to allow for those people who are novices. This does not mean you have no control over the training course. You can skip tracks and go back over any that you have already listened to by controlling the CD player or CD-ROM. An index of the learning material is given in the booklet accompanying the course.

The style of using two presenters alternately gives variety so you don't get bored with the same voice the whole time.

The course is very thorough in teaching you Windows 98, and takes you through every process meticulously, from opening and closing programs to changing the style — from classic style to web style and back.

It is very detailed and would be an ideal introduction to Windows 98 for anyone coming to Windows for the first time or migrating from Windows 3.1. Those already familiar with Windows 95, however, will gain little from it.

I would not hesitate to recommend this course to anyone for whom Windows 98 is their first introduction to Windows.

MICROSOFT OUTLOOK 98
CD-ROM — Spoken Word
Zain Media

Again, this is a spoken word training course. The pros and cons for this style of training are as described above.

The course is very thorough in teaching you Outlook 98, and takes you through every process in detail. There are minor exceptions because, with this method, they cannot teach you, using practical exercises, sending and receiving e-mails, nor can they get you to book meetings across your network. However, they do give you instruction, so this does not detract from the course in any way.

For someone like myself, who usually learns by actually using the system and uses Help, or the manual when in difficulty, this thoroughness is good. I learned different ways to do things, sometimes quicker ways.

I am not a long-time user of Outlook, so found the program very instructive. It may be too detailed for someone migrating from an earlier version of Outlook. Such a person would benefit from using the tracks selectively to learn the new features of Outlook 98.

The ability to go to a particular track would make this training course very useful as a reference tool, when experiencing problems, rather than using the Help facilities, which are often not as helpful in resolving one's problems as one would like.

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Sex Equality in the Next Century
A series of Conferences

23 February 1999, CBI Conference Centre, London
3 March 1999, Glasgow Moathouse
9 March 1999, Hilton National Garforth, Leeds

The present Government are committed to bringing in new anti-discrimination legislation in 1999 which means employers must keep up-to-date on these issues. These conferences, organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission's Equality Exchange, will:

- Provide up-to-date information on aspects of the Sex Discrimination Act.
- Be an opportunity for delegates to discuss these issues with expert speakers.
- Provide a forum for networking with other employers and fellow professionals.

Subjects to be included are Developments in the Sex Discrimination Act, Developments in Human Rights including the European Dimension, Developments concerning the Employment of Transsexuals and Maternity Legislation. A choice of workshops is also available.

Speakers will include Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC, who will discuss the wider context of the need for coherent reform of anti-discrimination legislation; Laura Cox, QC; Pauline Matthews, Principal Legal Officer at the EOC and Doris Littlejohn, President Employment Tribunals (Scotland).

Cost of attendance, including paper and refreshments, are £170 + VAT per delegate for Equality Exchange Members and £195 + VAT per delegate for non Equality Exchange Members; a limited number of places for Voluntary Organisations are available at £75 + VAT per delegate.

Further details are available from
White Rose Conferences on
01709 828181 (Telephone)
or 01709 828732 (Fax)

EQUALITY EXCHANGE

Leslie Rae reviews

Leslie can be contacted at Ellray Associates, 29 Laburnum Grove, Sheffield S71 1GR, tel 0114 248 3725

HOW TO DEVELOP TEAM GOALS and **HOW TO GIVE AND RECEIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Jenny Hill
Gower
Multimedia packages in the Managing Performance, Animated Video Series. Video plus Facilitator's Guide plus 'Managing Performance' — a Gower Management Workbook. £255 plus carriage and VAT each.

These are the first two in a series of four multimedia packages (the other two will be 'Managing Coaching Assignments' and 'Recognizing Success') intended to help trainers, line managers and team leaders in the development of their groups, or as self-development aids. Each pack contains a ten-minute animated cartoon video, narrated by Robert Powell.

The subjects of the pack are demonstrated by Brown Hilda, a Viking captain who is battling to discover the New World and faces shipwreck, being marooned on a desert island with her crew, overseeing the teambuilding of a new longship and dealing with confidence crises of one of her trustiest lieutenants. The narration covers all the aspects of the subject in a traditional manner as the cartoon progresses.

Supporting the videos are facilitators' guides. These describe in the Team Goals pack: how to get the best out of the programme; a team leader's guide to describing and developing goals with a team; six structured activities; using training videos; and further resources. The Feedback facilitator's guide contains advice on: how to get the most from the programme; six feedback activities; three structured activities; using training videos; and further resources.

With each pack there is a further text publication by Jenny Hill — *Managing Performance*. This is itself an immensely useful paperback of 145 pages, that can be purchased separately for £16.95. The content consists of clear checklists and guidelines, practical advice and self-assessments in the four areas covered in the series — a publication well worth having in its own right.

As for the videos, you will either love them or hate them, but they are certainly different from the traditional talking heads or obvious role plays in organisations with which it is often difficult to relate. My own personal view was that they did nothing for me, and I could easily become annoyed with them.

But some research with other people (including my wife — a very discerning audience member — and my trainee retail manager son) showed that some appreciated them and would find them a welcome change from the serious side of the business of learning. Others asked for them to be turned off after five minutes. I can only suggest that you see for yourself!

TRAINING PLACES: CHOOSING AND USING VENUES FOR TRAINING
Kaye Thorne
Kogan Page, paperback, 121 pages, £16.99
ISBN 0 74942576 8

Unless you are a trainer/consultant or training manager who has no options about where your training has to be performed, you will be faced with what is a perennial problem of deciding where it should be held to be most efficient and effective. Thousands of possible training locations exist in hotels, conference centres, training centres (either owned by companies or independently), and unless you or a friend have experienced some of them, they can be unknown quantities. This book sets out to offer help in every possible way to make your choice have the chance of being successful.

As in almost every situation, there are key areas in choosing a suitable venue — establishing the need; matching the venue to the audience; identifying what is available; choosing a venue; branding the event; running an event; overcoming difficulties; special events; corporate hospitality and exhibitions; managing your success — and these are, in fact, the chapters of the book. The first piece of advice is to answer certain questions, such as those that follow here. What type of event is it? Who will be attending? Where is the preferred location? When does it need to happen? What budget is available?

This is excellent advice and such guidance is repeated through the concise, logical, clearly written text. Checklists abound, including two entitled 'Checklist for pleasing delegates' and 'Checklist for pleasing the trainer'. The latter factor is often forgotten in finding a good learning environment, but if the trainer isn't happy this will almost certainly be reflected in the level of the training/learning.

The chapters described above are completed by two appendices, a further information section, and a recommended reading list. The appendices are (a) a selection matrix and (b) three checklists for the administrator, the trainer and the venue, plus a sample evaluation form. A 'Further information' section gives hotel, conference centres, business seminar and training venues and larger venue details, plus specialist services and publications. This section includes supplements for the USA and Australia.

An invaluable book for all training venue seekers and organisers, which, if linked with *How to Organize a Conference* (Ian Maitland, Gower, 1987) and *Training Event Planning Guide* (Graham Roberts-Phelps, Gower, 1998), will give everything any trainer/organiser could want for this area.

Coming soon in Training Journal

... Facilitation skills
... Knowledge management
... Appraisals

INSTANT TEAMWORK
Brian Clegg and Paul Birch
Kogan Page, paperback, 118 pages, £9.99
ISBN 0 7494 2804 X

TEAM CHALLENGES
Mike Fenwick
Fenman, ringbinder, £159 plus £4.80 carriage
ISBN 1 872483 64 X

Above are two collections of team development activities at each end of the rainbow in terms of size, number of activities, size of activities, types of activity format, length of time needed for the activities, price and publisher. Both valuable and worth having, they will enhance the practical library of team leaders and trainers responsible for team development events.

Instant Teamwork is a traditional size, bound paperback containing 72 activities dealing with icebreakers; warm-ups; time-outs; and hi-tech and hi-prep. The authors suggest there may be some resistance to using the exercises as they may be seen as silly games — some of them are and some would not be out of place at a children's party! But the authors are confident that they work in team development, because so much of the interactions are at gut level. However, if you the trainer/leader feel some are too silly, the answer is simple: don't use them. But do not make assumptions that may be completely wrong. On so many occasions I have had senior managers, some no longer in their first (or even second) flush of youth, crawling around on the floor with Lego bricks! These activities take typically two to ten minutes and most are physically active, although not requiring Gladiator status. I feel these are ideal activities to insert, instantly, during a team development programme when the atmosphere looks as if it is becoming too serious and people are starting to become concerned, as warm-ups after lunch or in the morning, and as natural bridges between discrete sections of the programme. Each activity follows a pattern of preparation notes; running time; environment; team size; description; feedback; outcome; variations; and star ratings (all on one page).

An appendix contains a number of 'selectors'. A different and valuable collection.

Team Challenges is a collection of fifteen team development activities contained in a hardback, A4 ringbinder. The collection covers energisers, icebreakers and end-of-programme challenges. Some are described as being hilarious, some hard, but all are fun and all are to good effect. Each activity calls for two or more teams and involves competitive situations where it's combined skills that score. Some involve mental agility; some are also physical; some need creativity and ingenuity; all suit varied abilities; some are purely paper-based; and some get teams physically on the move. All the activities are concerned with teamwork, but can be used to develop skills in more than one area. Each activity follows a format of introduction; purpose; activity; what happens; time; materials; how it is done; presentations; and debriefing. The times required for these activities range from about 45 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes.

This collection of team development activities is well worth considering, albeit expensive, but certainly in an organisation with a number of teams needing development it will soon pay for itself.

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Steve Holman reviews

Steve is Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, Department of Retail and Marketing. He may be contacted on 0161 247 3989.

CORPORATE AMNESIA
Arnold Kransdorff
Butterworth-Heinemann,
hardback, £19.99
ISBN 0 7506 3949 0

This text establishes the concept of Organisational Memory (OM) as an essential and powerful management tool. There is no longer a work scenario of a 'job for life' for the vast majority of the UK's labour force. This has massive implications for employees in terms of job changes and the trauma surrounding these moves. But perhaps only now has the realisation that this mobility has damaging consequences for organisations been truly recognised and explained. Few British companies are passing down knowledge and hard-earned experience, with the subsequent result that these lessons have to be re-learnt. This is recognised as an expensive and time-consuming waste. Each new generation of employees are having to 're-invent the wheel' and expressions such as 'with the benefit of hindsight' illustrate the importance of respecting OM as an asset, expensively gained and easily lost.

Organisations have 'downsized' and adapted to compete in world markets. The workforce left is a full-time core, with part-time and contract labour supplementing to meet organisational needs. The inevitable consequences are lost culture, identity, morale and arguably — the most important of all — knowledge.

The author argues strongly to keep know-how in the company for what seems to be blindingly obvious reasons. An early example used is the case of Idi Amin and the expulsion from Uganda of the entrepreneurial Asian community, with the subsequent disastrous effects on Uganda's trade and economy. It has taken over a decade for the new breed of Ugandan trader to learn the necessary skills of the marketplace. By wiping out at a stroke the country's businessmen the nation was severely handicapped for a generation. The book explains how internal knowledge can be retained and utilised. The notion of using professional debriefing techniques to provide rolling generations of employees with a company's business experience is not unrealistic. The examples given throughout the text are persuasive and definitively impressive.

At the end of each chapter there is an excellent reference section and there is an index and bibliography which supports further research and learning. The content of the book is such that the reader is captured from the start both by the awful obviousness of what is being stated and the dreadful awareness that, despite its truth, few organisations recognise the implications of their actions and policies. The writing style is fluid and easy to follow. (This is an asset for such an academic text). This unique guide to experiential learning will provide practical and stimulating reading for all types of people in businesses, town halls and government departments, management, academics and students.

I view the text as essential reading for all practising managers.

Women managers double this decade

The number of women executives has more than doubled since the beginning of the 1990s, according to the latest National Management Salary Survey, published by the Institute of Management and Remuneration Economics.

The survey shows that the character and culture of the workforce has changed significantly during a quarter of a century. In 1973, women made up 37 per cent of the workforce and women managers were almost non-existent, comprising less than 2 per cent of the two million managers in the UK. Today, half the workforce comprises women and the proportion of women managers is approaching 18 per cent — up from 8 per cent in 1990.

Women managers are most successful in the UK's dominant services sector. Half of all personnel managers are women, followed by more than four in ten managers in insurance and pensions, and over a third of marketing managers are female. This contrasts with manufacturing, research and development, purchasing and contracting where fewer than per cent of managers are women. Nearly 18 per cent of personnel directors and 13 per cent of marketing directors are women.

The 1998 National Management Salary Survey covered 25,952 individuals employed by 584 organisations. A copy of the survey is available from Remuneration Economics on 0181 549 8726.

To advertise in
Training Journal
Contact Sue Mennell
Tel 01353 665779 ext 211
Fax 01353 663644
e-mail sue@fenman.co.uk

Award scheme for business and management students

Business and management students are invited to take part in the 1999 Association of Business Schools' Award Scheme. A prize fund of £5,000 is offered to undergraduates and postgraduates on business and management courses at 100 UK business schools. There is a series of awards for both undergraduates on 'sandwich' degree courses and postgraduates on master of Business Administration programmes. Undergraduates will be invited to show what they have learned during their placement year and explain how it will enhance their future career prospects. MBA students will be invited to demonstrate how their programme will help them launch their own company or develop a new division/product area for their employer.

The competition is open until 30 April. Full details are available on the ABS Awards Scheme hotline on 0800 779090. Entry forms can also be obtained on the Internet: www.the-abs.org.uk

DATE & VENUE	EVENT	CONTACT
15 March Leicester	**Best Value and Developing Frontline Staff** (Seminar)	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
16–17 March London	**Knowledge Management via your HR Intranet**	Softworld, 12 Princeton Mews, London Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT2 6PT; tel 0181 541 5040; fax 0181 974 5188.
23–24 March Leicester	**Managing Yourself, Your Time and Your Work**	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
24–25 March London	**Knowledge Management** (Conference and Exhibition)	Learned Information Europe Ltd, Woodside, Hinksey Hill, Oxford OX1 5BE; tel 01865 388000.
25 March Surrey	**The Role of Culture in Modern Business**	The Centre for International Briefing, Farnham Castle, Farnham, Surrey GU9 OAG ; tel 01252 720 416; fax 01252 719277.
25–26 March Worthing	**Women in Management**	MSS Axion, 11 Heene Place, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NL; tel 01903 266675; fax 01903 694883.
7–9 April Stratford-upon-Avon	**Developing Consultancy Skills**	Mandy Croxton, Development Resources Ltd, 11 Southbourne Court, Drury Lane, Doré, Sheffield S17 3GG; tel 0114 262 0428.
13–14 April London	**Influencing The Outcome**	Ken & Kate Back Limited, PO Box 33, Henley on Thames, Oxon RG9 1YN; tel 01491 411341; fax 01491 411094.
15–16 April Warwick	**Flexible Learning Forum '99**	British Association for Open learning, Suite 16, Pixmore House, Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth, herts SG6 1JG; tel 01462 485588.
19–20 April Loughborough	**Behavioural Safety Faciliators Workshop**	Joyce Bostock, Centre for Hazard & Risk Management, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU; tel 01509 222175; fax 01509 223991.
19–20 April London	**Developing Workplace Counselling Skills**	Carole Spiers Associates, Gordon House, 83–85 Gordon Avenue, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 3QR.
20–21 April Leicester	**Working in Teams**	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
20–21 April London	**Assertiveness At Work**	Ken & Kate Back Limited, PO Box 33, Henley on Thames, Oxon RG9 1YN; tel 01491 411341; fax 01491 411094.
20–21 April London	**Intranet Expo '99** (Exhibition and Conference)	Conference hotline 0181 987 7828; exhibition hotline 01203 426472.
27 April London	**The 1999 Connect Show**	David Walkden, Connect Venues, The Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1 2BX; tel 0114 249 3090; fax 0114 249 3091.
17-18 May Bucks	**Senior Executives Pre-Retirement Seminar**	Prudential Retirement Counselling Service, 30 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 1LB; tel 0171 861 5202.

Free listings on this page are included at the discretion of the editors. However, any company wishing to make a firm booking may do so for a nominal fee of £15.00 + VAT (total, £17.63) for each entry. Entries are limited to three per company in any one issue. Please send your entry details, with cheque, four weeks prior to publication date. Cheques should be made payable to Fenman Limited and sent to ***Training Journal*, Clive House, The Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4EH.**

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